

THE
MICROGLYPHICS
OF LOVE

AMANDA MATHEWS

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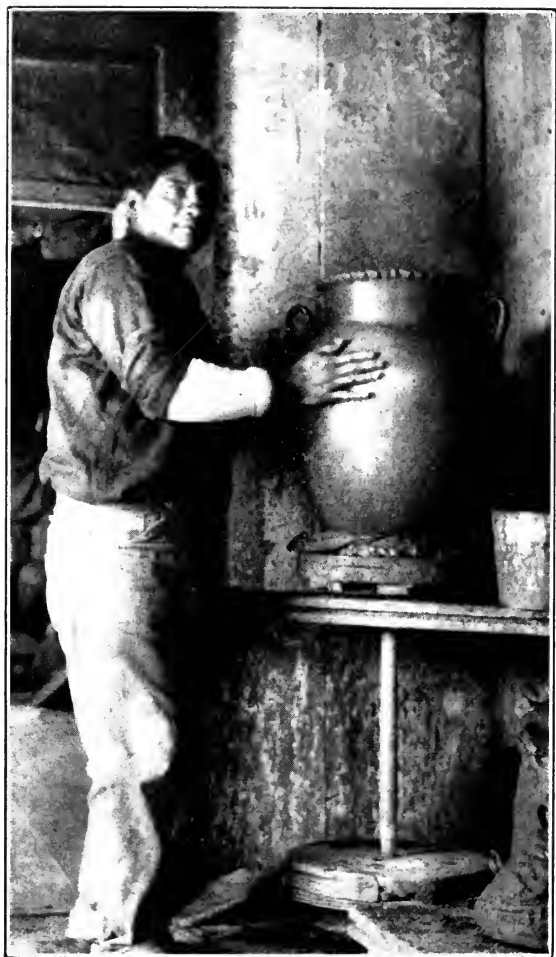
THE HIEROGLYPHICS OF LOVE.

**Stories of Sonoratown
and Old Mexico.**



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The Hieroglyphics of Love.

**Stories of Sonoratown
and Old Mexico**

by

Amanda Mathews

**The Artemisia Bindery
Los Angeles
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this one being number 330

Amanda Mathews



DEDICATION

**To my Colleagues of the Los Angeles
College Settlement, this little volume is
lovingly inscribed.**



FOREWORD

These tales dealing with the Mexican *peonada* have been written that you who read may love, as I love, a dark and lowly people who are yet rich with the riches of the poor, and wise with the wisdom of the simple.





HE mother of Teodota sat in the doorway with a bowl of meat in her lap. Her greasy black dress wrinkled latitudinally about her shapeless figure. Her countenance was smooth, blank, and oily. As she cut the meat into bits for the tamales, an impotent dribble of monologue flowed from her flabby, pendulous lips. While awake, talking was a function as natural and continuous as respiration or digestion, and was interrupted only when her present husband exerted himself to beat or kick her into a brief interval of sniffing repression. On this particular afternoon Senor Garcia was not interested in damming the sluggish but endless current of his wife's conversation, for he lay in drunken sleep on a filthy blanket in a corner of the rough board pen, a Mexican Caliban, swart, low-browed, bestial.

Teodota knelt behind the metate grinding corn to be mixed with chile in the pungent tamales. She had dragged the clumsy stone implement to a position where she could see that her step-father still slept, notwithstanding his frightful inarticulate gulps and growls. A thin, flat-chested slip of a girl was Teodota, with great, piteous brown eyes, high cheek bones,

The Hieroglyphics of Love

small, pointed chin, and a complexion of tan satin. She was not beautiful; rather was she an intaglio of beauty with hollows where there should have been roundness. Her untidy black braids had been slept on many times since they had known a comb; the scant, tattered calico gown fell away from the upturned leathery soles of her bare foot. She guided the heavy stone roller with languid, perfunctory movements, while some clockwork in her brain prompted the periodical "Si madre," that fully satisfied her mother's conversational requirements.

The real Teodota was back in Old Mexico. Certainly she was not driven thither by any lack of familiar environment in the Mexican quarter of Los Angeles, for without the door was a court common to the row of one-room tenements, a court swarming with bronze infants rolling in the sun and permeated by the odor of parched corn and the soft spat, spat of tortillas between the women's hands. Nor would it seem necessary for Teodota to keep tryst in Mexico with a lover who had preceded her to the United States, but they had not found each other yet and she could meet her Pablo only at the plaza fountain in Texcoco.

Suddenly into the dream, but not of it, a white folded paper fluttered through the open window and lay on the floor beside the metate. The girl examined it curiously.

"What is it, daughter?" inquired the elder woman.

"I do not know, mother. It looks like drawing. I am sure it isn't writing."

"I can use it to light my cigarette."

"No, mamacita, I want it."

"For what?"

"I don't know."

Senora Garcia would have liked to argue the matter

The Hieroglyphics of Love

further, and had quite a notion of insisting on Teodota's giving up the paper, but there was no anchoring her conversational bark. She floated on to relating how the rats once ate the rent receipt, and before one could learn whether she had been obliged to pay the rent over again, she was adrift on Teodota's father's aunt's fear of the unpleasant rodents, and the paper was left far behind.

The girl abandoned the metate to peer from the small high window commanding a vacant lot dotted with tents inhabited by the families of peones employed in distant grading camps. A chubby small boy with black hair so thick and erect that he seemed to have on a fur cap, was digging his brown toes into the dust. He wore his mother's shirt waist, and his expression defied the world to consider it anything but a coat. He included Teodota in this general challenge, but he gave no sign of having the mysterious drawing on his conscience, and no one else was near.

The girl hid the paper where billows of a not over-clean chemise escaped at long gaps between buttons, and returned to her labor, but the apparently trifling incident had taken a certain hold on her listless, stunted intelligence. Recklessly, she pushed a handful of corn off the end of the metate and edged about on her knees as if to pick it up, in order to study the document with her back to her mother. The unlettered brain, not accustomed to flat symbols for the appearance of things was slow to find any significance in the lines. Very gradually did she achieve recognition of a railway train and the human figures, male and female.

As her step-father pulled himself into a sitting posture she thrust the paper back into her bosom, trembling lest he had seen it, and still more lest he beat her for the unground corn.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"Caramba!" he growled. "May the roof fall upon the Labor Union."

Mother and daughter exchanged glances of relief that, so far, the object of his wrath was remote and intangible.

"They told me in Mexico," he continued. "of a fine thing here in America called the Labor Union that pays a man when he does not work, that throws stones at him if he is such a fool as to desire work, and calls him—calls him—a pest overtake their speech that is hard as rocks in the mouth—"

"Scabe, padre," supplied Teodota, timidly.

"I come here with my innocent family. I seek out this Labor Union and say 'Here am I, Juan Garcia, who is no—no—' "

"Scabe, padre," ventured the girl again.

"'But hates work like the very devil,' Do they embrace me? Do they put money in my hand? Ah-h-h!"

His memory of the rest of that painful interview, when a muscular labor leader chose to consider that he was being trifled with, vented itself in a shrill howl of rage.

Teodota caught up a brown earthen pitcher, and slipping out as though to bring water from the hydrant, hid herself behind a scrubby red geranium in the angle between the last tenement and the high board fence. At first she crouched in wretched fear of being dragged forth to receive a beating, or witness one bestowed upon her mother, but the minutes slipped by without pursuit.

It was not because she needed to exercise her resourceful wits during this period of hiding that she fell to studying the paper again, but rather on account of a pleasant stir in some rudimentary faculty that under happier circumstances might have been

The Hieroglyphics of Love

imagination. Man, boy, woman, train, mules, she identified with growing ease and satisfaction. It was not for her to appreciate a crude power in every line, still less to trace a curious likeness to the ancient picture-writing of the Aztecs. Perhaps the descendant of some temple priest that labored over the Codex had drawn upon this ancestral skill wasted by inheritance to mere instinct. For her, it was a notable mental achievement when she perceived relations among the members of the groups of objects.

That man was kissing the hand of the maiden with a water-jar on her shoulder. Even so had Pablo kissed her hand under the portales that last morning, and when she inquired saucily if she were his grandmother, he snatched her to him and kissed both cheeks and called her "queridita." In the next square the same girl was being flogged. Even so had she been used by her step-father, who wished her to have no lover, but to continue making tamales for his support. Her beloved had left for the United States in just such a train.

This was a communication from Pablo! That supreme illumination in her dim intellect was a blessed miracle of love. She kissed the picture-letter and rocked back and forth, hugging it, while her heart nearly leaped out of her for joy. Then she fell to studying it anew. The square showing forth a man driving a team of mules hitched to a scraper was beyond her comprehension, as she was unfamiliar with grading camps.

At the bottom of the sheet the boy with the shirt waist and simulated fur cap was receiving a letter, running with it, and in the last square, delivering it to the maiden. Dear Pablo evidently believed that this boy was the messenger between them, whereas

The Hieroglyphics of Love

it must have been the angels or the saints, for had she not seen the boy looking as innocent and indifferent as you please?

When Tedota returned to the squalid room her step-father had a more immediate grievance.

"You impudent, lazy hussy! You sin verguenza! I'll teach you to leave your work and gad about the court!"

"If you touch me again," blazed the girl, "you'd better keep awake. I'll kill you if I ever catch you asleep!"

A rabbit at bay is at least a surprise, and the brute's jaw dropped, the upraised arm fell back, and cursing and blustering, he strolled forth into the court. With a champion hovering near, there had suddenly come to the girl the power to hate bravely. Heretofore she had feared her step-father as the savage who dares not hate the evil powers moving in the darkness lest they perceive his hatred and smite him afresh.

"Daughter! daughter!" wailed the frightened mother, "that was not a respectful manner to address a parent. When I was a girl it was the custom—"

"Si, madre," responded Teodota, patiently, as she indited her answer to her lover with a burnt match on a scrap of wrapping paper. Roughly, but eloquently, she sketched two little imploring hands, and flung the epistle from the window with childlike confidence that whatever powers had brought Pablo's letter would convey her reply.

It was a transformed Teodata that stood just without the heavy wooden gates of the court the next morning, apparently loitering in idle contemplation of the street, where Latin infants disported themselves on the sidewalks, and soft Spanish speech was heard

The Hieroglyphics of Love

in every doorway, but in reality her whole body was charged with excitement and impatience. Personal neatness in a board pen devoted chiefly to the manufacture of tamales could not be expected to attain any high standard, but her appearance this morning bore eloquent testimony to the civilizing power of love. Her abundant black hair, moist and glossy, rippled on her shoulders, with a red geranium glowing in its shadows. The billows of chemise between the distant buttons were snowy white, the worst rents in the tattered pink gown had been roughly mended, and even the blue rebozo lying across her shoulders had taken on a faded purity.

As though to set the seal of heavenly approval on such cleanliness another communication from Pablo was found pinned to the rebozo when she drew it in from the window where it had swung to dry. That the small boy was not in sight was ample proof that it had come by supernatural agency.

This last letter said more eloquently than mere words could have done: "I await thee at the tunnel." Yet with seeming nonchalance, Teodota watched the squat, receding figure of her step-father abroad on the only tasks compatible with his dignity and tastes—the delivery of the tamales to a dealer down the street, and the collection of the revenue therefrom. The very instant, however, that he disappeared into a doorway, she was off in the opposite direction, wrapping her rebozo about her head as she went, and giving the end a final fling over her shoulder.

The court of tortillas and bronze infants opens into The Street of the Good View, and this highway, if followed a few squares to the south, leads one into a tunnel piercing a hill, a tunnel in the heart of Los Angeles connecting a Mexican pueblo, dirty, peaceful,

The Hieroglyphics of Love

unprogressive, with a handsome, bustling, modern city.

At the Mexican end of the tunnel, just beyond the Chinese laundry, but before one enters the cavernous shadow and chill, stands an unroofed adobe hovel close to the highway. Teodota, hurrying by this ruin, thrilled from head to foot to hear her name.

"Pablo!" she gasped. Her soul rode the wave of joy to its crest; then dropped back into the trough of despair. "I took you for gente decente! How fine you are! How elegant! A grand senor!"

The tall, handsome Aztec looked down complacently at his black suit and the ends of his red tie, not displeased at the impression he made.

"Didst think, queridita," he laughed, kissing her cheeks as he had done under the portales, "that here in America I would be wearing white cotton trousers and leather sandals? No, indeed! This is another day."

"But I, Senor—"

"Call me not 'Senor,' but Pablo and thy sweetheart," he cried, swinging her to the top of a crumbling wall, where she was obliged to cling to him most deliciously.

"You will be ashamed of me."

"Nay, little one, we will soon mend thy distress. I know of a store not far from here with a sign—I cannot speak the strange word, but it looks thus." With a pencil he scrawled on a bit of plaster still clinging to the adobe: RUMMAGE SALE.

"This is a strange country, Teodota. At home it is the poor who sell their clothes—mostly in the pawn shops, though my uncle had six serapes bought off his back by gringo tourists. Here, it is the aristocrats who sell their garments to the poor, and very cheap,

The Hieroglyphics of Love

though, of course, one offers the half. Poor rich, to lose their pretty clothes; but I suppose the rents are high where they live, and they must have plenty to eat, being so accustomed. I can buy thee silk and velvet and thou shalt be a grand senora, as I am a grand senor."

"Dear Pablo, you are as good as the blessed saints who brought me your letters."

"It was a little boy, Teodota, whose father works in the same camp."

"He seemed not to be concerned in the matter, and I was sure it was the saints. I must go back now or my step-father will beat me."

"Back, little one? Never! Come with me instead. The beast shall never beat thee again."

"But the tamales?"

"I like tamales. You shall make them for me."

"What would my poor mother say?"

"We can let her know later, and she will be glad to have thee free from that cochino. Listen, lindita: Beyond this tunnel is a big red house that they say is the National Palace of Los Angeles, and here one must get a permit to marry, though the priest really does the work. Let us seek the red house."

"Oh, Pablo! Now?"

"Yes, querida."

Hand in hand, the lovers left the adobe, and the sombre echoing tunnel, with the electric wires seen like a spider's web across its farther end, was to them an underground passage to Paradise.

The Potter's Wheel



HE ruinous adobe where the potter turned his wheel was submerged to the eaves by the grading of the street, just as the old Mexican life of Los Angeles has been overflowed by the tide of American progress. Senora Ortega, a widow dallying with her thirtieth year, held her black skirts daintily above the dust of Sonoratown as she tripped down the embankment and entered the adobe by what had been originally its kitchen door, now the only entrance.

"Good afternoon, Senor Potter. I have come to engage a large olla to stand in my grape arbor. That careless Juana broke mine yesterday when she was filling it."

The potter rose with grave courtesy.

"I have many, Senora, and there may be one among them that is worthy. Shall we look?"

"No, no." The widow fluttered to a bench. "There is no need of haste. Let me watch you at your work."

Why women invite pain and court suffering is one of the unsolvable problems. Senora Ortega knew that her presence would be silenced by the whirl of the

The Potter's Wheel

wooden disk and therefore always opened her bosom to the pang.

The potter turned to her presently with the exaltation of creative effort shining through his otherwise heavy, stolid, half-Indian face. His voice was richly plaintive.

"I hope you won't think me wicked, Senor, but when I form some new shape of jar, I believe I know a little how the great God felt when he had made the world and held it in his hand and saw that it was good."

"It may be so," she answered, half impressed but longing for the conversation to take a more personal turn.

"Senora," he continued, "before I knew you, I thought only of making pitchers and ollas. Now I long to mold something with no use, but beauty, or perhaps to hold red roses like those you love to wear."

"Charming!" she answered.

"Would you consent to pose for me?"

"Being a woman, how can I pose for a jar?"

"They are not so unlike," he mused, "broken easily, overturning always, yet full of refreshment for the lips of man."

She stood among the huge black ollas awaiting the kiln, her ripe, rich Latin coloring glowing softly in the dark-walled, scantily-lighted workroom.

"Please place your handles so."

She laughed delightedly as she put her hands on her hips.

"Such firing!" he murmured, despairingly. "God, the great Potter, must be glad for the color in your cheeks and the shadows of your hair on your forehead."

The warmth of the kiln was reflected in the lady's face and the soft contour rippled into alluring dimples.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"Are you talking to a woman or an olla?"

"I always mark my jars and pitchers with women's names."

"So I have noted," she pouted jealously. Do you name them for your sweethearts?"

"Nay, Senora, the ollas themselves have been my sweethearts. I have said 'Today I met my Conchita on her way to the fountain,' or 'poor Maria! the world was too hard for her and she is broken.'"

"Hush and work, or I shall weary of standing."

"The common clay of my patio is not worthy." He wagged his head contemptuously toward a mud pudding outside the door. "See, I have some of another sort in this box on the shelf. That is the difference between us, Senora. The good God made you of fine white clay like this and me of patio mud."

She threw back her head as though contradicting not only him but a host of carping relatives and critical friends.

"We are both Mexican."

"Yes, but you are of an honorable California family while I am only a 'cholo'."

"There is no one who has any right to dictate whom I—associate with," said Senora Ortega.

The man bowed his head over the clay he was mixing.

"You couldn't—love—a potter?"

"No!" she cried petulantly. "I couldn't love a potter!" His head went lower and his hands fumbled the clay with aimless movements.

"How they would talk!" she continued. "But the worst would be myself. I should be jealous of every pot and pitcher for the way you touch it. No, I couldn't love a potter!"

"Beloved, I have no other trade."

"My husband would not have to work. My father

The Potter's Wheel

and my Miguel both left me houses. The rents are small but sufficient. It would be occupation for a man to collect them, and anyway just being my husband would keep him rather busy."

The man left the wheel and started toward his lady love, but she drew away pettishly.

"No, no! See what you would do to my dress. As a potter you may not touch me, but if you are willing to give up your dirty old trade, you may visit me this evening."

"You are an angel, Senora. But these jars already molded—tomorrow I will fire them and then——

"Not a jar! I forbid it!"

"The little white vase, querida, surely you will have pity on the little white vase."

"If you turn that hateful wheel again even once, it means you love your pots and kettles better than you love me. You cannot have us both; you must choose. Adios, Senor."

* * * * *

Three candles plastered with mud to the edge of the shelf threw flickering shadows that seemed to chase one another for sport among the huge black jars. On the rude stool before the wheel sat an elegant gentleman in full dress suit of black broadcloth. The potter had demanded and obtained a rebate of fifty cents because of the coat's peculiar cut, although the dealer in second hand clothing had assured him that nothing else was worn in New York and the style was bound to strike Los Angeles within the week. The clothes gave proper emphasis and setting to an expression of enigmatical dignity native to the potter's strong swarthy face. If he had claimed at that moment to be a foreign diplomat, it would have seemed an impertinence to mention credentials.

"Now I am a grand Senor," he remarked aloud.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"I forsee that I shall be very proud to rest myself from being so very humble."

He rose and moved uneasily among his ware.

"The loveliest lady in the world says you are not to be fired," he assured the black jars. "Yes, you will fall to pieces and be thrown on the rubbish heap before your time, but that happens to people also. You with a crooked handle and this cracked one—what of lame Juanico and the baker's foolish child? Do things sometimes go wrong on God's wheel too?"

He tested the lump of white clay with his fingers and poured water over it from a gourd.

"I can't bear to see it get dry. If she had only let me finish this last piece perhaps I could have been satisfied."

Mechanically he seated himself on the stool and dabbled his fingers in the soft clay. His foot sought the rude treadle below without his knowing it. Slowly the wheel began to turn, but the motion aroused him and he snatched away his foot and stared about the workshop. With a deep comprehending sob of renunciation, he rose and blew out one of the candles. He hesitated at the second, but puffed it away.

Before the third, he trusted himself to another look about the room coming back at last to the lump of white clay. Like a man walking in his sleep, he returned to the abandoned task. The wheel spun madly, the clay flowed through his shapely brown hands, mud and water splashed the black suit unmercifully. A few minutes and the white vase stood on the wheel, a thing of feminine curves ready for the kiln to confirm its molded beauty.

The potter brushed dreamily at the spots on his coat with hands that only made them worse. He never minded clay on his working jeans; why was he disturbed by these stains? He remembered now. With trembling hands he blew out the last candle. He had chosen.

The Christmas of Esperanza



HE girls of the Abejita sewing club were gathered at the College settlement, in Los Angeles, but no thimbles, samplers, patchwork, nor diminutive aprons were in sight. Even "bee-lets" could not be expected to moil at Christmas time.

A rainbow of gay calicoes, the little Mexican children sat in kindergarten chairs about a Christmas tree, whispering among themselves and pointing demure speculative forefingers at its deciduous adornments. Even today their swarthy little faces did not lose a certain racial sadness, the heritage of centuries.

Esperanza sat apart in a tiny rocking chair by the blazing hearth,—a pitifully emaciated little creature with palpitating breath and soft hoarse cough. The face had not altogether lost a certain delicate perfection of line and the big black eyes were feverishly luminous. She might have been a stray princess from the court of Montezuma. Certain ecstatic pats and wriggles expressed her utter confidence in her gala costume of sky-blue wool bathrobe and pink knitted shoes.

Across the hearth sat her worn and patient Aztec

The Hieroglyphics of Love

mother all in decent black calico with a decent black shawl falling away from her dusky plaits.

Several settlement workers moved about among the club members, but the one of them all to be followed most persistently by the children's eyes was the district nurse. She seemed slight and delicate for such work and her wide-open gray eyes carried always a startled look as if she were over young to be faced with the world's misery. The small folk doted on her in blue and white uniform, but today when she had donned for them a bewildering silk gown of the glowing red flaunted by the pomegranate blossom, she was a blessed miracle, and little brown fingers stole out for shy, awesome contact with her magnificence.

When the presents were distributed, Esperanza's lap was heaped. She greeted each new treasure with inarticulate gurgles of delight bubbling up from some exhaustless fountain of pure joy. The grown people first laughed in sympathy and then turned away with the laughter put out by sudden tears.

"Esperanza has the most!" quavered one injured voice.

"That's because she is sick," answered the district nurse with sweet finality, and Little Mexico, gentle and courteous always, was entirely placated. The mother hid her face in her black shawl. She knew why her child was receiving a triple and quadruple portion of Christmas favors.

The children were taken out for the final treat of a romp in the garden. Only Esperanza, her mother, and the nurse lingered before the fire which blazed bravely as if defying the early dusk already gathering in the corners.

"God's in His heaven,—
All's right with the world!"

The Christmas of Esperanza

The district nurse quoted the lines thoughtfully.

“How can it be ‘all right with the world’, dear, when your brief harmless life is going out for lack of breath at eight years old?” She spoke in English of which neither auditor understood a word. “I suppose it’s presuming but I can’t help trying to cast up your account with the universe, little one. Eight years ago you appeared on this planet, no one knows from just what faraway star, one more little brown baby in a Mexican pueblo where they were already thick as flies in summer time. Really there didn’t seem to be any great use of it, child.

“You were taken to the parish church arrayed in all the splendor of a greasy, rented, christening robe that had gone to the altar on half a hundred babies before your turn came. The village priest mumbled some hasty Latin prayers and when you once more blinked at the sunshine you were no longer nameless. Did the priest smile behind the Latin prayers when he christened you Esperanza? The name means Hope, but probably he had tagged too many peon babies for any fanciful relation between the baby and its tag to excite his interest.

“Now let’s endeavor to be fair, dear. You didn’t usually have enough to eat but you could always creep into mamacita’s lap and sleep in the soft darkness brooding beneath her black shawl. You stood in no peril of vanity, though your single cotton garment had a fine fringe of tatters. Your bed was a rush mat, but you never lacked the thrum-thrum of vibrant strings for your pretty whirls in a square of sunshine on the mud floor of the adobe hut. Papa was a musician, your mother has told me, with loyal elision of the detail supplied by old neighbors that he played intermittently and drank continuously. His taking off occurred one night when a drunken reveller at a ball

The Hieroglyphics of Love

absentmindedly used the orchestra as a target. Your mother is trying not to look her next trouble in the eyes, for she tells me every day that her daughter Hope is a little better."

"Mi Esperanza!" murmured the Indian woman brokenly.

The child could not spare any difficult panting breath for speech, but she reached out her little thin claws for her mother's hand, while her cheek nestled contentedly against the nurse's silken sleeve. Her wee shrunken face radiated such dazzling joy that the others could not do less than smile back at her.

"It's no use trying to balance the account after all, dear," continued the nurse less sadly. "When you can smile at us like that, it is plain we haven't all the items.

" 'On earth the broken arcs,
In heaven the perfect round.'

"Possibly it was whispered about in that faraway star whence you came that the eternal purposes of God required a certain poor barren life to be lived and then fade out in eight brief rounds of time. I am sure you were a tripping spirit, dear, and said gaily, 'This light task for mine,—only a few rough steps to be tripped, as merrily as may be and I am back again.' Was that the way of it, Hope, child?"

Esperanza gave her eloquent inarticulate gurgle of delight with her cheek still against the nurse's sleeve.

The Woman and the Idol

"I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul."



ARRY your old god, then, and let him grind your chili and roll your tortillas!" screamed Maura.

"Hush, woman!" pleaded Timoteo, with a sidelong glance of apprehension at the idol. "I fear that already he is offended."

The ferocious appearance of the Aztec divinity hunched in sartorial attitude on a soap box was not softened by the red paint still clinging in dim red splotches to his gray stone person. His hideous visage with great, round staring eyes and thick-lipped mouth drawn into an evil snarl, he owed to some unknown Indian stone cutter compelled to power centuries before by the elemental sincerity of primeval fear.

Maura's response was derisive, tantalizing laughter that loosened her dusky hair into her black eyes. She sat on the floor, leaning against the pink-washed wall of the large, bare adobe room. Her round market basket still hung on her arm, though her blue cotton

The Hieroglyphics of Love

rebozo had been flung aside in her excitement. From the kitchen came the soft spat-spat of dough between the hands of Timoteo's aunt.

Big, soft, handsome Timoteo sulked on the edge of his serape-covered cot. The brown Apollo and his jealous lady-love were both drift from the tide of cheap Mexican labor brought to Los Angeles by the railroads, a tide which seeps continually through the ruinous adobe tenements of "Sonoratown."

The man's lumbering brain sought a more discreet basis for his ill-humor than the fling at his ancestral deity. Maura was a Mexican Pegotty, and her laughter had caused another button to fly from her blue calico gown, allowing a fresh billow of chemise to appear.

"You made that dress too tight," he growled.

"I did not! It shrunk in washing," she retorted with spirit.

"Why didn't you shrink the cloth before you sewed it?"

"Idiot! Then there wouldn't have been enough. What do you know of women's garments? Would you have me dress like your god?" she inquired mockingly.

As the idol was carved with no other clothing than earrings, sandals and a few chronographic signs, the query was irritating, if not actually indelicate. Moreover it dragged the conversation back to their chronic quarrel, and Timoteo's slow mentality was not equal to another diversion.

"I hate him!" resumed Maura.

"That is not well. When my grandfathers neglected to visit him in the mountain cave where he lived after the Spaniards and the saints came to Mexico, their corn withered on the stalk and their babies in

The Woman and The Idol

the cradle."

"Your father needn't have brought him to Los Angeles."

"My father was the last to know his prayer in the old tongue, and he dared not leave him. Curses can travel without tickets. He taught me the prayer the night before he died."

"But the priest—if he knew——"

"Woman, I always confess having fallen into idolatry. He tells me it is a grievous sin and bids me finger my rosary three times round."

"But, Timoteo, he thinks you mean the idolatry in the prayer book. If he saw——"

"It is not for a simple man like me to read the thoughts of a priest, and I am very careful to get clear round the third time," answered the self-righteous Timoteo.

Maura was baffled by these theological subtleties, and so, womanlike, she slid away from them to attack elsewhere.

"I'll never come into this house to live until he goes out," she declared passionately.

"Concha Sanchez thinks he is handsome," answered the badgered lover sullenly. "She wants me to teach her the prayer to see if it won't cure her mother's toothache."

Maura sprang to her feet so vigorously that half the potatoes rattled out of her basket and rolled about the floor.

"I'll knock her head against the god's," she shrieked. "The horrid little tabby cat! Her mouth is big, and her teeth are crooked."

Timoteo's face relaxed into a slow, teasing smile.

"She has a gentle disposition, which is far more important in a wife."

The Hieroglyphics of Love

The girl rushed for the idol, tore her finger-nails on his rough cheeks and caused him to rock angrily on his soap-box pedestal.

Timoteo was readier at physical contention than at the light and puzzling fencing of the wits, and no fantastical gallantry restrained him from actively defending the god of his fathers. Seizing Maura by her sharp little shoulders, he shook her until the remaining potatoes danced out of the basket, dragged her to the doorway and pushed her roughly down the steps. She rushed away past the queer little shops with Spanish signs, while sobs and half-articulate threats floated back in her wake until she turned the corner.

It was a fortnight before the street of San Fernando and the house of Timoteo knew Maura again. The yellow glare of early afternoon lay on the squat, monotonous white adobes. With drooping head and one end of the blue cotton rebozo dragging unheeded in the dust, she crept along, crowding herself almost against the whitewashed walls.

At the foot of Timoteo's steps she paused irresolutely, ascended listlessly, set the door ajar, and listened again. From somewhere in the back came the soft, cool splash of rinsing clothes; Timoteo's aunt was therefore safely occupied and out of the way. Near at hand sounded the heavy, regular breathing of a man asleep. Maura slipped into the room, glided across the creaking boards, and hung over Timoteo, bending again and again to brush her cheek against his hand and lifting herself to just stir with lightest fingertips the heavy black locks on his forehead.

Suddenly she stood erect.

"You've lost that fine, steady job in the brick-yard," she murmured, "or you wouldn't be here asleep at this time of day."

The Woman and The Idol

She left the cot and walked over to the idol, towering above him with folded arms and her rebozo slipping from her thin little shoulders. The blue calico hung in limp, wrinkled folds; some past stress of emotion had swept off more buttons, and through the gaps the escaped chemise drooped in greasy dejection. The whole contour of the face had changed. The cheek-bones had sprung into prominence while the eyes had retreated into hollows, from whose depths, however, they shone with more than their old, defiant fire.

"Shameless one!" She hissed the words through her clenched teeth. See how you have done him wrong though he took your part even against me!" The brave voice faltered a little over those last three words.

"Of course it's no more than might be expected of you that my father should hurt his foot and my mother have the wash of the American lady stolen from the line, but I can't see why you made the street car run over our poor little yellow dog—he never barked at you. And all the nights I've gone to bed hungry—Oh, yes, I understand that it's thanks to you there are no frijoles in the pot. I've dreamed that you were sitting on my body crushing the life out of me. You won't come to me any more, old red stone Pig-face, for I have come to you."

In her excitement the last tones had become hoarsely vocal, and she looked about to see if she had been discovered. Timoteo had not stirred. The cool splashing still rippled in from the courtyard with a gurgling accompaniment of women's voices. The street door was open and the sunshine had tried to follow her in.

The idol was no larger than a small child, but heavy as a man. Hate gave those thin little arms the strength

The Hieroglyphics of Love

to lower the image from the soapbox to an ignominious reclining position on the floor with hands reaching beseechingly upward. In swift, silent, breathless fury, she half-dragged, half-rolled the idol to the open door.

There she braced her knees behind him, ready to pitch him headlong down the steps to the cement sidewalk below, the same humiliating descent to which she had been forced a fortnight before. She was only pausing until an elderly, stoop-shouldered American in black broadcloth should have passed by.

It would be useless to speculate concerning what manner of magic the Aztec god exercised to bring Professor Winters down that particular street far away from his accustomed haunts at an hour when he was usually at his private office in the college museum poring over the materials for his great work on the hieroglyphics of the native tribes of Mexico and Central America. He was an archaeologist of the old school, happy in the musty chill of a museum as a bat in a grange.

When his eyes fell upon the idol, they lighted as other men's for a familiar friend. He started up the steps to examine the curio just as Maura, after a backward glance at Timoteo, which she supposed had consumed the time necessary for the American to pass by, gave her enemy the fateful shove and started him bumping wildly down the rickety steps.

The dismayed Professor met him half way, wrestled with him bravely and succeeded in bringing him to an upright posture on the next to the lowest step.

"Izcozauhqui, the Aztec god of fire," he muttered, laying a tender, scholarly hand on the idol's head, "perfect, and undoubtedly antique."

But why here? The Professor stared about him as

The Woman and The Idol

a man might whose pleasure in greeting an old acquaintance had made him oblivious for the moment of the accidental circumstances surrounding the meeting. Maura was glaring at him vindictively from above, determined that his unmannerly interference should not save her foe. The American drew an immaculate cambric square from his coat pocket and dusted his knees and the idol's head impartially.

"Madam, does this valuable antique statue belong to you?" he inquired respectfully.

The girl made no response, for the good reason that she did not understand English.

"I desire to purchase it for the museum," continued the Professor. "Would you consider this a fair compensation?"

The shining ten dollar gold piece on the Professor's palm needed no interpreter. At this juncture, Timoteo, yawning and stretching from his siesta, appeared beside the girl in the doorway.

"Maura!" he exclaimed, "how came the god on the steps and what does the American want?"

"The god was just starting out for a walk when he met the American, who seems to want to buy him. I suppose he has had much ill-luck and so wishes to change his religion."

"See, they are like brothers already," observed Timoteo wonderingly, for the Professor, in order not to disturb their conference, had seated himself on the step with his arm resting absently about the idol.

"Do sell him to this good man, dear Timoteo, and let there be peace between us."

"Sell!" cried the Mexican in loud, declamatory tones. "Sell the god of my grandfathers! Woman, you are crazy! Rather let me sell my aunt, my grandmother, and all my female relations!"

The Hieroglyphics of Love

The Professor rose and tendered him a gold double eagle. Timoteo regarded it with a hypnotized stare.

"We could be as happy as the blessed angels in Heaven if only that hateful one were sent out of the house," pleaded Maura.

Timoteo shook her off, and descending the steps, took his stand by the idol.

"I see," observed the Professor courteously, "that your wife clings to the statue—some woman's whim, I suppose—while you are inclined to be reasonable. Out of consideration for her feelings, I will give both gold pieces."

The Mexican stepped back so that the Professor's gold-laden palm was extended behind Izcozauhqui's back where it was emptied and the coins noiselessly transferred to the pocket of the hypocritical Timoteo, who immediately stepped forward again to bid farewell to his ancestral deity.

"You can see for yourself," he wheedled, "what a devil of a temper she has, and that she is determined to marry me. You are not safe with her, and I cannot ask you to remain and share my misery."

Maura flung herself down the steps and pushed Timoteo aside.

"Red stone Pig-face!" she cried. "We are selling you to this American for gold enough to make such a wedding feast as you never dreamed of, and won't be here to spoil with your ugly face and uglier tricks. I dare you to do us any more wrong! I dare you! I dare you!"

"I'm sorry," said the Professor, apologetically to the sullen, discomfited Timoteo, "that she takes losing him so hard. I'll get him out of her sight as soon as possible."

The contagion of emotional excitement increased his

The Woman and The Idol

mental vibrations to such a rate that he perceived instantly a harmonious relation between the weighty fire-god and a passing express wagon drawn by a lame horse and driven by a swarthy Mexican.

In this manner did Izcozauhqui leave the house of Timoteo forever.

By the Stragglng Cypress



HE last day of August was mourning itself out. Doleful streams fell into the patio from the stone waterspouts overhead. Alvarado de Mendoza, the poet, sitting by an unpainted wooden table littered with books, manuscript, and greasy corn-husks, the envelopes of devoured tamales, was wishing the wish of all bards since the tribe abandoned wandering minstrelsy—that landlords would accept verse in lieu of coin. He glanced contemptuously about the room for which on the morrow he must pay a fortnight's hire. He scowled at its walls of sickly blue with a yellow flower stenciled on at exasperating intervals, neither regular nor irregular, the damp brick floor shaken by earthquakes to a billowy conformation, the gabled bedstead with wooden mattress, covered by a coarse red blanket, and the rickety wardrobe, whose doors most unkindly insisted on falling open, revealing secrets of scantiness and poverty.

By coming out on the corridor and leaning over the sagging iron railing, as the poet did now in his restlessness, one could look past the wrinkled portera crouched in the doorway staring out into the rain, and

By the Straggling Cypress

get a glimpse of the street beyond. This was a scant satisfaction when obtained, for there is no drearier by-way in the Mexican capital than the dark, narrow, muddy street of Padre Lecuona, devoted so largely to the charcoal trade as to be a study in grime.

Nothing could be drearier than the prospect, unless it were the dreary tale of how the street received its name. A long time ago, on just such a night as would soon settle over the city, one Padre Lecuona, summoned thither in haste, found that a soul in agony had returned to its mummified unburied body for shriving. The brilliant young prelate was reduced by the shock to a simple little brother of the church, with barely wit enough to perform its humblest offices.

“Bah!” exclaimed the poet in disgust. “I really must move or I shall become as witless as Padre Lecuona.”

Alvarado de Mendoza was handsome, after a certain delicate, undersized student type, common in Mexico, a product of the struggling genteel, who wear shoes without stockings and starve on six-course dinners, each course a highly spiced dab of nothing. Yet Alvarado recalled regretfully the dinners in his father's house, now that he commonly dined on a medio's worth of coarse sidewalk cooking. He was waiting for fame and fortune to seek him out in the street of Padre Lecuona.

He returned to his desk and studied with calculating eye a penny taper in a saucer-shaped brass candlestick. Hearing sandaled footfalls in the corridor, he turned to greet an Indian girl with a flat basket on her head. Her unconfined hair, moist and half-curling, fell each side of her face in abundant blackness. Her great dark eyes and smooth light-brown skin, with chocolate shadows about the brows and drooping

The Hieroglyphics of Love

mouth, would have made her a beauty in the days of Montezuma. Even one so critical of feminine charm as the poet found her comely.

Placing her basket on the floor, she removed the blue rebozo that protected the laundered garments from the rain, and spread it carefully across the foot of the bed to dry. As she lifted out the clothes two silver dollars fell from their folds and rang cheerily upon the brick floor.

"Your trade pays better than mine, Alejandra," laughed the youth. "Evidently, however, your other patrons are not poets."

"It is the rent, senor. I—I did not mean—I wanted you to find it when I was gone."

"But, woman!" he exclaimed. "I owe you three months' rent already."

"It is no matter."

"Think how you have toiled for this. I accept it, but only as a loan. I hope to pay you back tenfold."

"I am happy to serve the senor."

Little streams trickled from her draggled pink calico skirt. The poet lighted the taper.

"Sit down, Alejandra."

"Thank you, senor." She rested herself deprecatingly on the edge of the bed.

"Some day we must give ourselves a holiday together, you and I—a whole long beautiful day in the country."

"With me, senor! But your friends——"

"My friends!" he echoed with some bitterness. "Where have I a better friend than you?"

"The senor is too kind," she murmured, confusedly.

"We will seek a green hillside, and while you pluck flowers I shall compose a song to you, the queen of lavanderas. Familiarity is a blind to conceal beauty.

By the Straggling Cypress

I delight in a public laundry, built like a Greek temple, its columns hung with flowers, a stream of mountain water laving the stones where kneel the brown-armed Nausecaas. But I will await our dia de fiesta before inditing the poem."

"They say that the saints give each person just one perfect day. That will be mine."

"Mine," he answered, "will be the day when I first see the woman I am to love for all time. There will be other days, but none so free from dross as that first."

"No," she said, "it must be sweet to be loved, but loving is very sad. Pray against it, senor."

"Aye, love is too often sad for such as you," he murmured, compassionately.

During the ensuing silence, the poet turned over thoughtfully the manuscripts on the table. The lavandera's humble presence humanized the cheerless room and changed into a happy lilt the doleful trickle of the waterspouts.

"I believe I stay here by myself too much," he began. "I write of life, death, and the universe as far away abstractions when they are all contained in the heart of a simple Indita like yourself. I must share human experience and emotions. Tomorrow I shall sit in the Alameda and be a harp for the breezes of humanity to play upon."

"The senor is very wise and it is not for me to understand. I must go now or my mother will worry. She is blind and has only me."

"I do not know how to thank you, amiga." He rose and held her shapely brown hands with careless affection, unconscious how they thrilled and quivered in his clasp. "In thee do I salute the spirit of our humanity, which is, after all, a pure flame of love and

The Hieroglyphics of Love

good-will." With whimsical solemnity he kissed Alejandra's fingers as he released them.

The lavandera darted out into the rain, her whole self one throb of pain and joy. The love that gives all, craves all, asks nothing, is so bitter that no one lifts the cup voluntarily, and yet, if the sweetness of it could be distilled, prosperous love would regard it enviously and kings seek it on foot.

Long tree-shadows still lay athwart the flower-beds when the poet kept tryst with himself in the Alameda the following morning. Pale, seedy students paced the walks muttering from black tomes and ignoring the early babies. The bright-feathered foreigners in the bird-house screeched cheerfully, while bronze Neptune grasped his trident as if he had a mind to spear the barelegged peones filling the birds' drinking-cups in the fountain pool about his throne.

The portico of the fanciful octagonal Moorish pavilion was strewn with fluttering white paper, worthless after comparison with the prize-drawing numbers in the lottery bulletin besides the arched entrance.

"Ah!" exclaimed the poet beneath his breath, "in the endless cycle of death and life, what human dust may not be mingled in these fallen leaves of hope—perhaps Midas and the beggarly poet singing unheeded at his gate, both still tossed hither and yon by the breezes of destiny."

Within the pavilion another drawing was in progress; the tree of hope knows as many springs as autumns. The light from stained-glass windows fell in mosaics on the untidy floor. A great blue globe adorned with gilded stars creaked and rattled as it was turned by a dirty, shambling Indian. Small numbered cylinders, imprisoned by some mechanism within the globe, were handed to a shabby clerk in rusty black,

By the Straggling Cypress

who read them aloud.

"Fortune's wheel is a stupid affair when one is near enough to count the spokes," the poet mused.

Dazzled by the transition from the subdued, part-colored atmosphere within to the sunshine without, Mendoza beheld what seemed a vision. Past the statue of Venus she paced slowly, a heavy white veil framing her face without concealing it, a girdle of celestial blue confining her close white draperies. The face was beautiful, with brown eyes and exquisite coloring. Behind her hobbled a bent old family servant, with black shawl shadowing her wrinkled face. Into her hand the poet slipped the medio with which he had intended to buy himself a breakfast.

"Who is she?" he breathed to the old woman.

"Dona Josefa de Nunez," she muttered as Mendoza kept pace with her.

"And why—"

"Her dress? It is a vow. She had the smallpox. She prayed the Virgin of Lourdes to spare her beauty. The disease left her without a blemish, as you see. Now she goes to give thanks at Our Lady's shrine."

"The Virgin of Lourdes is French," said the poet.

"She understands Spanish prayers," sharply retorted the old servant.

To the right of the door, as one enters the church of San Diego, in a rock grotto hung with paper, morning-glories, stands an image of the Virgin of Lourdes. Josefa de Nunez, kneeling there, might have been this image translated into living, breathing, glowing flesh. The poet on his knees at a respectful distance drank in the beauty of her upturned face, rapt and saint-like in the dim, musty light.

True to the code of Mexican lovers, Alvarado de Mendoza shadowed his lady on her homeward prog-

The Hieroglyphics of Love

ress. Just as she was about to vanish into the doorway of a handsome stone house on Avenida Morelos, she swept the street with a farewell glance that just for a second rested on the poet with coquettish recognition of his infatuation.

“My angel is yet a woman!” he exclaimed.

He found out later for his sorrow and undoing that the feminine in her composition was in excess of the angelic.

Once more it was the eve of rent-day with the poet, and neither wealth nor fame had overtaken him in the street of Padre Lecuona. Sad laggards they were, and rent-day an excellent traveler. Mendoza strode wildly back and forth across the billowy brick floor, unshaven, shivering, racked by hunger and insomnia. On the floor lay a crumpled letter from a famous critic. As the poet's songs were new, the critic heard no music in them, and so stated with polite brutality.

That was not the worst. In letters of blood all over the sickly blue walls, he read the words of the old servant, his go-between with his lady love.

“Dona Josefa says she wants no more of your tiresome verses. She can not weave them in her hair. If you really love her, send her jewels.”

To this message, old Petra had added kindly enough, for many medios, aech a poet's meal, had passed into her withered palm: “If the senor, when he stands beneath her balcony, would wear better clothes—my lady, who is fair as her French grandmother, is also proud as her Spanish grandfather, and hates poverty as she does the devil.”

The next morning Alejandra entered hastily from the street. She had ironed all night for the rent, and

By the Stragglng Cypress

now hoped that she was earlier that the landlord.

"Don't go in, girl!" shrilly cried the portera.

"Your poet shot himself last night, and they have taken the body away."

"It is well!" breathed the woman.

"Aye, it is well," echoed the portera, voicing the fatalism of her race.

Alejandra experienced just this one moment of exalted selfless consciousness before her throat choked with the cry of love for the one beloved. She turned and stumbled away, her face buried in her rebozo.

It was the Day of the Dead. Alejandra, bearing a flimsy black wooden cross, four little candles, and a bunch of marigolds, made her way through the crowd about the gates of Dolores Cemetery.

Her eyes were dull, her cheeks sunken, and her movements without spring. She wore a scant, shapeless black calico gown and a black shawl lent her by a kindly neighbor, to whom also her feet owed the unaccustomed sensation of shoes.

She passed by the stately tombs laden with porcelain wreaths where huge candles flickered palely in the sunlight. Higher up the hill, the path wound among neat, black, substantial crosses. Here smaller candles burned in cheap vases, but proudly, too, for these graves were the permanent possession of their tenants.

On the very top of the hill, nearest heaven of all were the rented peon graves, ill-defined mounds marked by numbered tin tags, the rent receipts of their occupants. Alejandra put down her load beside one of these numbered mounds at the foot of an unkempt, stragglng cypress.

All about her the humble dead were having their notable social day of the year. The wreath of dried

The Hieroglyphics of Love

grass encircled the earthen bowl of frijoles con chile, or a loaf of pink-incrusted bread, surmounted by rude doughy skull and crossbones. The brown pitcher of foaming pulque made the round of the relatives and friends seated about. He who lay below heard his name still spoken in the air with the friendly wish that the earth be light upon him.

Wearily Alejandra dug and prodded until the black cross stood upright. She braced the candles with little heaps of earth; the marigolds stared up at the sun.

Two well-dressed men climbed the hill, the elder and stouter panting from the exertion.

"We will find it somewhere near here, Don Pancho, I am sure," said the younger encouragingly.

"I hope it is not much farther, Don Ricardo," gasped the other.

"This answers the description of the tree—yes, here is his name on this insignificant cross."

Alejandra confronted them as they stood with bared heads beside the mound.

"Does the poet, Alvarado de Mendoza, lie here?" inquired Don Ricardo.

"He does, senor," she responded, defiantly.

"Who erected this cross?"

"I did, senor."

"And who are you?"

"I am his lavandera, senor."

"Woman, you have done nobly," spoke up Don Pancho with impressive pauses, partly due to shortness of breath. "You will rejoice to be informed that the National Academy, in recognition of his great merit, has decided to dedicate a suitable tomb to his memory, with life-size statue. It will be placed at the foot of the hill near the great gate that all who enter may do him honor."

By the Straggling Cypress

Not for any injustice to herself would her Indian heart, disciplined by centuries of submission, have questioned the ways of the gente decente, but through her the poet's wrongs cried out.

"Why did you not come sooner, senores? Why did you wait for him to die in poverty and despair?"

The representatives of the National Academy looked uncomfortable, particularly Don Pancho, for he was the author of the crumpled letter.

"Senores," she continued with sorrowful dignity, "throw away this little cross that was all I could give him, and make his grave where you will, but this day is ours, his and mine, that he promised me we should spend together. I beg you to leave us alone."

Don Pancho looked back once as they descended the rocky path and saw her, a lonely, majestic figure, standing by the forlorn evergreen; but when his companion turned for the last time, she had thrown herself down by the mound and lay with her cheek against the marigolds.

Manuela's Lesson



THE Gonzales Court was a tiny village of whitewashed board cabins crowding what had once been the spacious back yard of an old adobe dwelling in the Mexican quarter of Los Angeles. In the midst of the court stood an orange tree, which, like the Gonzales family in the old adobe, could remember better days. Denied its fragrant service of bloom and fruit, it cheerfully supported tugging clothes-lines, just as old Don Francisco Gonzales, who once counted his possessions in miles, now interested himself in the handful of low-caste Mexican immigrants occupying the cabins about his back door.

Manuela and her eight-year-old daughter Regina lived in one of the cabins. Soft and slow of speech was Manuela, though she could fling words like missiles when she choose. She was short and plump, with a soft, round face, low forehead and heavy jaw. Bland was her smile and inscrutable the gleam of her black eyes as she joined the group of women filling their brown

Manuela's Lesson

earthen pitchers at the hydrant by the orange tree. She hated them impartially; they had husbands earning a dollar a day in the grading camp, while she was obliged to support herself and Regina by taking in washing.

When she returned to the cabin with her brimming pitcher, Regina sat on the floor by the kitchen stove tying some rags about a stick valuable for a knotted protuberance that imagination could make serve as a head. She was a thin little creature with bent shoulders, a shock of coarse black hair, and a small, dark, solemn face.

"Give it here!" cried Manuela, opening the stove door.

"Oh, mama!" wailed the child, "see, it has a beautiful head."

With one sweep of her round brown arm, Manuela administered a stinging cuff, snatched the stick from the child's thin little claws, and thrust it into the fire.

"You ungrateful brat, to sit there and play while I wear myself out washing for you! Bring in some wood, and if any of those lazy pigs of women speak to you, don't you dare answer."

Regina shrank past her with as wide a detour as the small kitchen would allow, and soon staggered in with a woman's load of wood. She put it on the floor and crept behind the stove again, where she fell to twisting her leathery toes. Every few minutes she peeped shyly at her tyrant, glad to escape her notice, yet regarding her with bright-eyed admiration and dog-like affection, as she rubbed the steaming clothes.

Manuela had an evil temper, violent and uncontrolled. She needed something to cuff and pound, to lash and revile, to abuse and terrify. The pity was

The Hieroglyphics of Love

that she could not have had a wooden doll or a rag baby. Regina served the purpose well enough, but it was hard on Regina. And yet Manuela loved the child with an affection as strong and fierce as her temper. This was not evident to the casual observer, because the pain she endured from the constant unwitting reproach of Regina's mournful loving eyes found anomalous expression in fresh blows and heavier tasks. The neighbors, perceiving only the effects upon Regina had been waxing more and more indignant for many weeks.

At the sound of cabalistic words in an unknown tongue, Manuela looked up from her washing and confronted a man in blue uniform who thrust a blue paper into her hand and was gone.

Don Antonio Gonzales, a fine, pathetic old figure sunning himself on the bench beneath the honeysuckle at his back door, took the blue document from Manuela's hand. Stripped of its legal flourishes, the general import seemed to be that Manuela Isalas was commanded to bring a certain infant named Regina into the presence of the Juvenile Court of the City and County of Los Angeles that same day at three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Why?" demanded Manuela.

"The ways of the Gringo laws are not to be understood," responded Don Antonio, thinking bitterly on the land and water rights stripped from him some decades before.

The woman read the time of day by a glance at the scanty shadow of the orange tree, huddled closely about its trunk, as she hastened homeward. The cloud on her swarthy face fairly darkened the kitchen.

"What is it, mama?" faltered Regina, looking up at her from the floor.

Manuela waved the blue subpoena in her face.

Manuela's Lesson

"You ungrateful little beast! Tell me what you have done that I am ordered to bring you to the police court!"

"I—I don't know, mama."

"You tell me, and quickly."

"Perhaps it's because I lost that money going to the butcher's."

"You little fool! As though they would care how you waste my money that I work myself dead to earn. It is something wicked, vile and abominable that you have done, and now you are hiding it from me."

"I—I—I can't think, mama," gasped the child.

Manuela shook her savagely, flung her against the wall, and went out, leaving her to search her poor, stunted, child-brain for the cause of this fierce storm of calamity raging about her.

"My fine neighbors say with their lying tongues that they know nothing of the matter," snarled Manuela, returning from a fruitless round of the cabins. "Let them take that bone to another dog—of course they know.. I'll find out at the police station, and then, Regina, I'll hang you to the orange tree until you dry up and turn into a scarecrow."

* * *

There was a murmur of compassion in the courtroom when the little, dark, cowed creature was called forward with Manuela. The gray walking hat and the brown wool gown, almost hiding her bare feet, were youthful in comparison with the expression of her small, solemn face.

The first witness was an American lady whom Regina had sometimes seen chatting with the children who played about the orange tree. She was dark and slender, clear-eyed and sweet of expression; yet her face was never without a certain sadness, as though she saw overmuch of life in its dreary and depressing

The Hieroglyphics of Love

phases. Her testimony was merely that she was Head-worker in the College Settlement, and this had been reported to her as a case of extreme cruelty.

The women who gossiped about the hydrant were now called in turn, also the court interpreter. One had peeped in at Manuela's window and seen her hit the child over the head with a board; another in like manner had discovered her choking the girl until witness never expected her to breathe again.

Regina seemed to shrink together in a fresh accession of misery—dry misery, without tear nor quiver. She believed that all these people had come to tell that stern man away up in the big chair how her mama was obliged to punish her, which was another way of dilating on her terrible sinfulness.

Manuela understood better. Wouldn't she show those meddling pigs of neighbors that they needn't peek and pry about her windows! She saw herself giving Regina such a beating in front of her cabin door as would demonstrate whether or not she did as she pleased with her own. Now the judge was addressing her.

"Do you love your little girl?" he inquired, through the interpreter.

"Si, Senor," she responded, amiably.

"Then, why do you beat and choke her?"

Manuela did not answer.

"What have you to say in your own defense?" was the next question.

"It is all spite-work of my evil-minded neighbors," she answered, promptly. "No word of it is true."

"It is the decision of the court that the child be taken from you for the present and placed in an orphanage."

When this was translated to Manuela, her face darkened instead of paled with the retreat of blood

Manuela's Lesson

from her swarthy skin.

"Why?" she gasped, weakly.

"The case is concluded," declared the judge. The bailiff conducted the woman and child to seats on the side, and while the court was dealing with an incorrigible small boy, the Headworker made explanations in broken Spanish. The child clung to Manuela, crying now in a terrible, silent fashion she had been taught. Hanging to the orange tree until she dried up and turned into a scarecrow was preferable to this being snatched away into the unknown.

"I will be good," she moaned over and over, "I will be so very good, mama, if they will let me stay with you."

The Headworker expected contention and a show of cheap, noisy grief, but Manuela, looking almost refined in her black gown, silently held the child close while the tears streamed down her cheeks, and she mopped her face and Regina's alternately with a red bandana. She was in the grasp of a power as much stronger than herself as she exceeded Regina and the lesson was most wholesome.

To her own great surprise the Headworker found herself saying:

"I can arrange to have you visit the child once a week at the orphanage. Come to the house when you are ready, and I will go with you the first time to show you the way."

* * * *

During the days that followed, Manuela went about her washing in a sullen rage. What she suffered from the elusive taunts of the women about the hydrant was less than the pain of the empty cabin.

"Abominable brat!" she would mutter. "If she walked in at the door this minute I would beat her well."

The Hieroglyphics of Love

But Regina did not walk in at the door, and the poison of Manuela's fury had to burn itself out in her own veins, a novel and purifying experience. The Headworker was rich in the sort of wisdom that inspired her to avoid the Gonzales Court, and a week elapsed before a civil, subdued Manuela awaited Regina in the reception room of the orphanage.

* * * *

Of course Regina should have been perfectly happy in a model orphanage, but she did not know it for a model orphanage or any sort of orphanage whatsoever; she supposed herself in jail for that terrible unknown offense. She wondered what sins the other children had committed, some of them babies in arms, and long vistas of infant depravity opened before her. Laboring under this misapprehension, isolated by not knowing an English word, her heart tendrils suddenly torn from their one poor support, every sense shrinking from the crowd of new impressions, she was probably as homesick a child as ever dampened an orphanage pillow.

She entered the reception room, a dainty little figure in pink gingham, with a pink ribbon in her hair, and threw herself into Manuela's arms, sobbing audibly this time. In the first stress of sorrow Manuela came very near cuffing her soundly, but was restrained by the presence of the Headworker and the matron.

"Is it possible that the neighbors could have been mistaken or merely spiteful?" asked the matron.

The Headworker smiled, a sad, shadowy smile.

"Her past is black enough," she answered, "but God might make a real mother of her yet, though I must say I don't see much in her original composition that He could use."

One afternoon, about a year later, the Headworker

Manuela's Lesson

appeared in the Gonzales Court, attended by a cherubic small boy tugging at a child's rocking chair. Manuela was washing before her cabin door and the Headworker studied her keenly—the same fat, heavy face—perhaps she had made a mistake in advising that her child be returned to her.

"This chair," she felt her way slowly in the less familiar Spanish idiom, "belonged to a little girl who died. Her mother asked me to give it away. I have brought it for Regina when she comes home."

"When Regina comes home?" repeated Manuela stupidly.

"If you had the girl again, would you be good to her?"

"Senorita, it was all spite work—my neighbors—"

"Drop that old lie and answer me."

Beneath the sullen scowl the Headworker saw some better mode of feeling struggling for expression in the dull, swarthy face. At last the scowl relaxed, the chin dropped, and tears rolled over the fat cheeks.

"I—I was a devil, Senorita. Regina is an angel. I would try to make it up to her."

"The Probation Officer will bring her here in an hour," the Headworker announced briefly, and turned away.

All the rest of the day the Headworker was haunted by her deed. Her only comfort lay in conjuring up Regina as she sometimes saw her at the orphanage—a well-fed, well-dressed Regina, but always wistful, always with the trembling protestation on her lips that she would be very good if they would only let her go home to her mama. For the child's sake the experiment must be made.

At bedtime the Headworker slipped from the house alone and a few steps of familiar way brought her to the court, where a light still burned in Manuela's

The Hieroglyphics of Love

cabin. The little window was uncurtained, and standing without in the shadow of the orange tree, she thought it no wrong to watch what went on within.

Regina was sitting up in bed dressed in the little white nightgown she had brought from the orphanage. Evidently she asked for water. It was also evident that nothing was too good for the restored child. Instead of turning to the kitchen cupboard, Manuela took a gaudy, flowered cup from a shelf of cheap ornaments before a little image of the Virgin, and brought the water in that. The treasured cup slipped through Regina's hands, and a muffled crash came to the watcher outside through the thin board walls of the cabin. Breathlessly she beheld Manuela tower above the frightened child, saw the round arm ready to descend on those shrinking little shoulders, and then—the arm dropped limply back, and the woman threw herself on her knees before the image of the Virgin with upraised hands and moving lips. A few minutes later she rose and seated herself on the edge of the bed. Regina crept into her arms and they rocked back and forth together while Manuela crooned an old lullaby.

With a sob of joy, the Headworker turned homeward, whispering to herself: "God has made a real mother of her, after all!"

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

I.



THE house of Maria Luisa's aunt stood just where the principal street of Chivatito faded into a country lane, and the solid rows of one-story adobes made way for patches of maize and beans. A bare-floored room contained two wooden beds with gabled headboards, an unpainted table, and a large embroidery frame set before the open door. Behind this apartment was a tiny kitchen, where the aunt could be heard preparing the two o'clock dinner.

Maria Luisa stuck her needle in a square of the drawn-work table cover in the frame and leaned back, her dainty, childish figure drooping with weariness. A peon youth in loose, white cotton garments, red sash, and leather sandals watched her from the doorway. The serious racial expression of Juan Gallardo's handsome swarthy face was overlaid by a deeper shadow of moodiness.

"Tomorrow," said Maria Luisa, "the tablecloth will be finished. The tourists at the station will twist it about and offer half the price, pretending not to

The Hieroglyphics of Love

want it, while they cannot keep their greedy eyes away from its beauty. If they knew the cost of the linen, and all the days it takes, and how tired we get, would they care, do you think?"

"No one could help caring when you are tired, Senorita. I am sad to see you work so hard. If you would only go to the United States with me tonight in the labor train——"

"Hush, Juan! I won't listen."

"A dollar every day, Maria Luisa—not a common dollar, but a great gold dollar, worth more than two of ours! Think of it, when now I labor in the alcalde's garden from morning till night for a quarter, a dime, and two miserable centavos. To be sure, I should have to work all the time; those restless Americans have never learned that God made some days for sitting in the sun. Still, nothing would matter if I had you. It would be so easy, Senorita, and there is time enough to see the priest."

Maria Luisa made savage jabs at the tablecloth with her needle. The man's heathen beauty moved her more than she wanted any one to know—even herself.

"Juan, I will hear no more of your dollars, nor your labor trains. You drive me to speak plainly. You ought to look for an Indian girl of your own class, with her head covered by a blue cotton rebozo." She glanced proudly at her black shawl hanging over the back of a chair. "Besides," she concluded, "I am promised to Guillermo."

"That little pig of an apothecary's clerk, with his pantaloons fitting his bandy legs like his skin! He carries round his whole fortune in silver buttons that jingle so you can hear him coming from as far as you can the milkman's burro. Why is he better than I? With my gold dollars I can buy tight pantaloons and

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

silver buttons, since they are what you admire."

"Well, if you did, wouldn't you still be an Indian?" inquired the haughty little lady, whose skin was the same shade of pale brown satin as Juan's, and whose hair was as black and coarse as his. In her case, however, some admixture of the conquering race had pressed back the high cheek-bones and narrowed the face to the pure, delicate oval beloved by cathedral artists.

"The master of the municipal school says that to be Indian is no disgrace. Some of us were kings before the Spaniards came. But let us not quarrel on my last day. See, lindita, I have a parting gift for you."

He produced a small box of capsules from a fold in his sash.

Do you remember the American with long white beard who visited the alcalde and walked in his garden every day?"

"It was about a year ago."

"He gave me these. Somewhere in the United States there is a church with a beautiful saint holding out her hand. Once a year, on her anniversary, the hand is full of these little balls. No one knew what they meant until she told the padre in a dream that whoever took three at bedtime on a Monday night would have pleasant dreams and good fortune for a year."

"How splendid! Tell me the saint's name, and I will ask the father about her."

"Who can remember their queer names? Hold out your little hand just like the American saint. There!"

"Many thanks, amigo. I am glad this is Monday, so that I won't have to wait. Forgive my rudeness, and remember me kindly. Go now, for if my aunt opens that door and finds me talking to you, she will be very angry. Adios!"

The Hieroglyphics of Love

Juan dragged his hat-brim over his eyes and turned to his own house, a mere hut, plastered, swallow-fashion, against the larger dwelling of Maria Luisa's aunt. The sunshine entered with him, revealing earthen floor, smoked whitewashed walls, and a collection of small pitchers hung in circular pattern above the brick charcoal stove, unlighted since his mother's death the winter before. He shut out the sunshine, except a single beam reaching in through a round hole in the upper part of the door.

Drawing out a loose brick from the brasero, he deposited the pill-box in a concealed space behind. One of these wonderful pellets, given by the wise American doctor whom he had met in the alcalde's garden, had put his mother into a sound sleep even when her pain was the worst. With three Maria Luisa would sleep like the dead. He flung himself down on a rush sleeping mat and drew out a pink ticket from his bosom. With much effort he spelled out that Juan Gallardo and wife were entitled to free transportation to Los Angeles, with the company of laborers enlisted for railroad construction in the United States.

Juan was not blown by any sudden gust of passion, not moved by any wild lust of possession, to kidnap Maria Luisa. He would greatly have preferred to court her leisurely, to teach her the lesson of loving page by page as the days went by. The kidnapping would entail a great deal of trouble and risk, and would be displeasing to the girl. He heartily regretted the necessity of it. But if he stayed, she would marry Guillermo; if he left, she would marry Guillermo. The only way to prevent the catastrophe was to take her with him. His mental machinery was slow, but not cumbersome, his thoughts few and simple, but they moved with force and directness not to be despised.

When the soft dusk, kept at bay without by the last

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

resistance of the dying sun, held all the corners and lurked among the rafters in the hut, Juan fastened his sombrero over the hole in the door and lighted a penny candle. Drawing a bright-bladed knife from his sash, he pecked cautiously at the party wall, loosening tiny bits of dried mud so quietly that no sound as marked as the nibbling of a mouse could be heard in the house of Maria Luisa's aunt. At ten o'clock, when the lights were out, and all was quiet in the neighboring dwelling, he had reduced the thickness of the wall by half in a space of about four feet square.

He worked fiercely now and faster. At eleven o'clock, by the watchman's whistle, he had a tiny opening; he could hear the aunt's snores and a softer breathing from the corner. Enlarging the hole, he saw by the dim light of a taper burning before the santo on the wall that both women still slept soundly. Half an hour of desperate effort, and he stepped into the room. First he plucked the girl's clothes and black shawl from a chair by her bed, tied them into a bundle, and slung it on his back. Then, with touch swift and strong, yet gentle, he rolled the blankets about the little figure, gathered it up in his arms, and made his escape through the hole and out of his own door down the darker side of the narrow street.

His burden wriggled and moaned. She was evidently frightened at the handling, yet unable to shake off her heavy stupor. Those were exciting moments when he slid past the gendarme at the corner and dodged the watchman at the depot. The excursion train of laborers due to leave Chivatito at midnight was already in. Juan avoided the box-cars that were being loaded with his townspeople, and made for one away down the line whose doors happened to be open. A torch stuck in a jar of ashes lighted weirdly the huddled peons--men, women and children.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"My wife is overcome with grief at parting with her relatives," Juan explained, easily. "It would be better for her if you would permit me to shut the doors."

With the car closed, he felt tolerably secure, but great was his joy when the train rumbled on its way. His slow brain did not concern itself with future complications.

When the other passengers were asleep, Juan opened the bundle of clothes and selected shoes, stockings, dress and black shawl. Softly he unrolled the blankets at one end until he held both little brown feet in one big hand. Before he slipped on the stockings and shoes, he bent over and kissed the feet reverently, as if they belonged to the Mater Dolorosa in the parish church. As with tenderest caution, alternating gentle lifts with long pauses, he managed to slip the black lawn dress over the girl's white gown, it seemed to him that it was the image he was investing in its somber robes. He was so filled with this idea that he did not touch his lips to the pure childish face on his arm, nor even to the cold little hands that he rubbed to warmth.

II.

Maria Luisa slept so long that Juan became alarmed. The following afternoon an old woman helped him to force some strong coffee between her teeth, and they shook her almost roughly, thus doing ignorantly the best that was possible under the circumstances; and finally she emerged from the stupor induced by an exceedingly heavy dose of morphine. It was fortunate that the American saint had not prescribed four pills instead of three.

At first Maria Luisa's bewildered eyes and brain

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

could focus on nothing; but gradually she perceived the car, its inmates, and the lumbering landscape. With a scream she jumped up and would have thrown herself out at the open side of the car had not Juan caught her and pulled her down into his arms, holding her like a child, and using just enough strength to control her wild struggling. The half dozen children among the company mingled frightened wails with Maria Luisa's cries, and so a car-load of noise and confusion was whirled over the Texas plains.

The Indian contented himself with kindly physical restraint until, from exhaustion, the girl's screams yielded at times to breathless sobbing; these intervals he improved in efforts toward soothing and explanation.

"We are bound for America, little one. I could not go without thee; so I was obliged to fetch thee just this way."

He laid the wet, quivering face tenderly against his own.

"My aunt! My aunt! My aunt!" was the burden of the next paroxysm.

"Never mind, my soul," he answered, in the succeeding time of lessened uproar. "I shall earn big money in gold, as I told thee, and soon we can send for the aunt."

"Oh, I hate you! I hate you!" she shrieked. "Guillermo will find us! He will kill you and take me back!"

"Aha!" said old Severa, who had assisted in reviving her. "It's a lover that all this fuss is about! You are a shameless thing, and deserve not such a good, kind, patient husband."

"He is not my husband! He stole me! Make him take me back!" cried Maria Luisa, appealing to the whole car.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

The tired mothers, hushing their frightened children, apparently did not hear.

"I'd beat her," muttered one peon.

"It's any ruse to get back to her lover," said another, with a leer.

When Maria Luisa understood that they were all against her, she ceased struggling, and Juan allowed her to slip from his arms to the floor, where she lay face downward, sobbing piteously.

The journey was long and wearisome. The box-cars loaded at Chivatito were switched off at El Paso, but the car Juan had invaded happened to be booked for Los Angeles. Maria Luisa hugged her corner, turning away from food, speaking no word, sobbing at intervals. Sometimes in the night, when Juan was sure that she slept, he would lift the black shawl and gaze with superstitious reverence at the delicate features, pale and waxen in the flickering torchlight as those of the Mater Dolorosa. Then she was the saint he had snatched from its niche. In the morning she was no saint, but a grieved and frightened child torn from its home. His heart ached for her suffering, and yet, child, saint, or woman, she was his Maria Luisa, he had taken only what belonged to him. He was not in the least jealous of Guillermo now; it was enough that he possessed the girl, and Guillermo did not.

On the morning of the fourth day, the human freight arrived at Los Angeles. The immigrants were shown to their domiciles in the village of side-tracked box cars, each expected to accommodate two families.

Juan recoiled from the squalor of this box-car settlement, and recognized still more its impossibility for Maria Luisa. In consequence of taking counsel with friendly paisanos who had been imported in earlier consignments, he left Maria Luisa in charge of Severa, discounted his first month's wages at the company

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

store for a few dollars in hand, and found his way to a part of Los Angeles known as Sonoratown—a remnant of the old adobe pueblo.

Sonoratown is detested by the citizens of Los Angeles as the last outpost against progress, and adored by the tourist as the last melting remnant of decayed romance. Neither tourist nor citizen knows much of the life of this section, which has within itself the widest social gulfs. Behind the adobes occupied by the descendants of proud old Spanish families, poor now, but with traditions of halcyon days before the gringo invasion, are numerous courts concealed from the street and swarming with the despised cholos, imported by the railroads for cheap labor. Here the low life of Mexico is duplicated.

In one of the best of these courts, Juan secured a tolerably clean room with a board floor. He bought a cot, table, a rocking-chair, and a scrap of carpet at a secondhand furniture store hardly to be distinguished from a junkshop. A little old Mexican with bony horse and rickety buggy brought Maria Luisa and Severa from the station. Juan had engaged his fellow-passenger as housekeeper and guardian of his stolen treasure.

Maria Luisa was too weak from fasting, too dazed, too much overcome generally, to make any resistance when Juan carried her in and laid her on the cot. He explained to the wondering neighbors without that his delicate wife was greatly exhausted by the hard journey. At once broth, stew, tortillas, and oranges were passed in to Severa. Having reached the point of healthy physical reaction, the girl ate heartily, and was soon asleep.

During the months that followed, Maria Luisa led the life of a martyred princess. The old woman tended her assiduously, always speaking of her with a signifi-

The Hieroglyphics of Love

cant twist of her skinny finger on her temple. All day the child rocked and rocked, nursing her hatred of Juan, and trying to keep Guillermo's insignificant image caged within memory's walls. To her great disgust, her cheeks grew plump and pink from ease and nourishing food, in spite of her determination to pine away and die as a proper punishment for Juan.

For weeks she withstood the pretty clothes of his providing, but at last the thought of how dowdy and unattractive she would appear to Guillermo when he arrived to claim her conquered pride. Juan's eyes lighted up at the dream in pink calico, but the dream blazed at him:

"Guillermo shall pay you before he kills you!"

Then she relapsed into her usual sullen quiet. Yet, after all, the man's persistent kindness and respectful wooing had their unacknowledged effect. Sometimes, in the night, she would look over to the corner where Juan lay rolled in his serape, and imagine herself pleading with Guillermo:

"Spare the Indian. He loves me madly, and is sufficiently punished in losing me. Let us go."

III.

One afternoon a dumpy little Mexican woman, panting and perspiring, rushed into the court and stared wildly about her. Maria Luisa, sulking as usual in the rocking chair, caught sight of her, and in a moment they were hugging and kissing frantically. Soon the aunt was in the rocking chair and Maria Luisa knelt beside her, with her arms about the other's shapeless waist, feasting her eyes on the homely, pudgy features, seamed with good-natured wrinkles.

"How did you manage to find me, tia querida?"

The tale was long, exciting, and punctuated by frequent wheezing gasps for breath. It began with the dreadful cold she had contracted through that hole

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

in the wall. The next chapter was the sale of the beautiful drawn-work she had saved for Maria Luisa's dowry, to raise money for the search. The body of her narrative was the pursuit, told with elaborate detail to its successful issue. Her conclusion was the grievance that after all her trouble and anxiety here was her niece fat and pretty, with the house small, but not so bad for a young couple, and a servant, like the gente decente, and never a thought for her poor old aunt!

It took more hugs and kisses to disabuse the aunt's mind of such a preposterous notion.

Strangely enough, the story had not touched on the one person of whom the girl most wanted to hear. She was reduced to the bold impropriety of a leading question:

"And Guillermo? When will he come for me?"

"That pig! That fool! That yard of red tape! I sent for him. I showed him the hole. I offered him money to pay the expense of chasing Juan and bringing you home. He said that you ran off with the Indian of your own accord. In three weeks he was married to that cat of a Dolores, who sells her drawn-work for nothing, just to spite us!"

Maria Luisa's eyes were blazing with the wrath of woman scorned when Juan entered, looking very fine in his black suit and red tie. The aunt was evidently quite impressed.

"Greeting, amigo," she said, amiably.

Juan kissed her hand. He was dismayed at her advent, but his hospitality was equal to the emergency.

"I am delighted that you have come. This is your house, and I am your most humble servant at your orders. The little maid has missed you sorely."

With some excuse of providing a better supper for la tia, he walked out of the court and then blindly on

The Hieroglyphics of Love

and on. He had seen the anger in Maria Luisa's face, and supposed that it had reference to himself, as usual. She must have heard from Guillermo. Probably he would soon come to carry her off. Juan felt a strange new jealousy of the other—a jealousy not to be satisfied by overcoming or again outwitting his rival. When the man perceives that, without her heart, possession of the woman over his shoulder is not possession, he enters into the sorrows of civilization.

Juan came to the abandoned Catholic graveyard, midway between Sonoratown and the river, before it occurred to him that at that moment the aunt might be spiriting away her niece. He must hurry back.

There were other changes in Juan less apparent to the aunt's uncritical eye than the better raiment assumed for its possible effect upon his obdurate lady. Face and figure had lost their soft contour, but gained in strength and manliness. For half a year, except for detaining the girl against her will, he had put her comfort and pleasure before his own. He had eaten less, that he might buy her fruit and candy. He had even limited his cigarettes. He had walked weary miles to and from his work when he might have ridden. Hardest of all, he had over and over again downed his fierce impulse to seize the petulant bit of femininity and compel her by brute force to submit to his caresses.

There was no conscious moral struggle, and it was with no exhilaration of victory, but doggedly and reluctantly, that Juan turned in the direction of the river, thus giving time for escape. He was merely acting in unwilling obedience to a habit grown too strong for him. The separate acts of unselfishness, the daily and hourly cherishing of his sulky little mistress, had dammed the current of his selfish passion and turned it into a new channel of loving. His treasure would be

The Kidnapping of Maria Luisa

gone when he returned, and his heavy heart knew that he would not follow or seek to recover it.

Entering the court two hours later, he found Severa calmly gossiping with a neighbor. The aunt was asleep upon the cot, and Maria Luisa, in white gown and red ribbons, sat in the rocking-chair.

"Juan," she exclaimed, "where is that fine supper you promised to bring? See, our good aunt has gone to sleep waiting for it."

The man remained in the doorway, too bewildered to respond.

"I have been talking to our aunt," continued Maria Luisa, "and she says it is dreadful for us to be living together like common Indians. Her family have always married. You might see the priest tomorrow, unless"—here her voice died away into a wail with a threat of tears in reserve—"unless I've been so bad you don't want me any more."

Juan threw out his arms, and Maria Luisa rushed into them. The cage door was open at last, but the captive nestled happily against his breast.

Cupid and the First Reader



IGNORANCE of the English language is not confined to any age; hence the pupils in the Foreign First Grade varied from round-faced cherubim whose chubby brown legs swung in mid-air to young people in their upper teens who graced the large desks at the back of the room.

The attendance of the Mexican contingent was exceedingly irregular. Attendance involves effort, and where effort is concerned, your Mexican is an unconscious astrologer and awaits with admirable patience a propitious conjunction of all the planets.

Consequently Castelar School in the old adobe quarter of Los Angeles had been in session a fortnight before Ramon Morales and Guadalupe Puentes happened to be present the same day. Even then they could hardly be said to meet, except in some etherealized sense of the word, for their desks were in opposite corners, separated by a desert of wriggling bodies and bobbing black heads.

Ramon studied the brown slip of a girl attired in pink calico skirt and blue calico waist with an eagerness of attention never wasted upon his number work. Silver crescents hung from her small shapely ears and a scarlet geranium glowed in the glossy braids of her coarse, abundant black hair.

Cupid and the First Reader

From beneath demurely lowered eyelids, Guadalupe stole an occasional modestly coquettish glance at this swarthy, well-formed youth whose steady gaze from great black eyes burned its way clear down to her heart. Before the teacher had finished calling a roll musical as running water, Love had marked them for her own.

"Present!" murmured Ramon.

"Present!" gurgled Guadalupe.

The other names were cheap brass and noisy cymbal.

Ramon, impetuous soul, craved speech with his beloved but recognized leonine obstacles. During hours, that hostile expanse was between them. At recess, she would be conducted through a different door to a distant portion of the school grounds. Here the girls were not hedged by visible walls, but fierce teacher-dragons guarded their seclusion and howling Italian demons hooted at any attempted intercourse.

Heretofore, Ramon had regarded penmanship as a hand-cramping labor arbitrarily imposed by his kind but unnecessarily strenuous teacher. Now he perceived that upon him, reluctant and unwilling, there had been forced a gift of the gods.

Pencils and paper were more abundant in this temple of learning than tortillas at home. The unwary instructress was occupied in burdening cherubic intellects with the oppressive absurdity that they must not call things by their right names, but must address "el gato" as "the cat" and "el caballo" as "the horse."

Ramon seized a pencil. "Te adoro!" prompted his brain, but the pencil did not move. He laid it down in the groove on his desk and continued to regard it with reproachful surprise. Even more heavily on the baffled lover than on the cherubim had fallen Babel's curse.

Having only a speaking acquaintance with their

The Hieroglyphics of Love

native Spanish, what Ramon could write and Guadalupe could read was contained within the opening pages of their English First Reader. Much abuse has been heaped upon California State text-books, but probably never before had the First Reader been condemned for its serious shortcomings as a Lover's Manual of Correspondence.

Ramon turned the leaves discontentedly. How was a man to pour forth his soul through such meager, ill-fitting phrase as "See the fat rat and the cat"?

At last, however, he laboriously penciled a sentence and watched it travel from hand to hand. Guadalupe saw the note coming, but when the girl next her laid it on her desk with a teasing giggle, apparently she could scarcely desist from building letter-cards into words long enough to open it. Not until she had fitted "g" triumphantly to "d-o," did she condescend to spell out the brief missive,

The duck runs to the hen

Persistently withholding her eyes from the opposite corner, the girl consulted her reading book and indited a reply, which Ramon received safely,

The hen can run to the duck

Cruel coquetry! Any one knew the hen could run to the duck, but would she?

Ramon felt as if he had a row of eyes extending clear around his head. However he squirmed in his seat or looked out of the window, he could still see as through a golden haze, a brown slip of a girl with a dot of scarlet geranium burning in her dusky braids. Fairly dizzy with the rapture of her beauty, he inscribed passionately,

Cupid and the First Reader

Polly is a pretty little girl

Blushing and shrinking, the maid sent the capitulating reply,

Beni is a good boy.

In this manner did Ramon and Guadalupe exchange their plighted troth. Why not? When it comes to lovemaking, language is at best a lame pack horse limping under a load too heavy for him. If he limped a little more in the present instance, what of that?

About half-way between the lovers was the seat of Antonio Taliberti, an Italian fiend aged fourteen. He always read the missives before passing them on, but fortunately he was a materialistic, muddle-pated imp and their esoteric meaning was safe from him.

One afternoon, when he had chewed his way clear around his new penholder, carved his initials on the under side of his desk where he could read them with his fingers, and dipped the braid of the girl in front into his ink-well, so that as she wriggled it printed a fantastic pattern of blots on her red calico waist, he cast about for some really notable achievement. There was Ramon intently penciling a scrap of paper. After all, the reason why these "Greasers" should desire to exchange parts of their reading lesson was no business of his, but it was most decidedly his affair to see that the desire was frustrated. Sighing at the toil involved, he selected a similar piece of paper and wrote,

Shut up!

Ramon saw incomprehension struggle into comprehension as Guadalupe unfolded the missive, saw amazement melt into indignation, saw her crumple the paper

The Hieroglyphics of Love

angrily and fling it on the floor, and then beheld only the dusky plaits and the dot of scarlet geranium, though a hand that stole up occasionally might have been to wipe away a surreptitious tear.

The astonished swain indited another communication. Antonio grinned significantly, hitched his single overall strap higher on his shoulder, and applied himself with equal diligence.

This time Guadalupe ignored the note for five week-long minutes, but feminine curiosity conquered at last.

You no good

She read, and the effect on her already lacerated sensibilities was all too evident to the distracted Ramon.

Despairingly he scribbled every endearment allowed by his scanty linguistic resources. By this time Antonio wanted a more pronounced sensation. He laid the note on his desk and regarded it sorrowfully; then with the air of one goaded to a painful duty, he waved his hand aloft.

"Teacher," he complained, "I no can study—all the time I make pass notes Ramon write to her." His thumb relentlessly singled out Guadalupe sitting very straight, her cheeks ablaze, and her eyes glued to her book with hypnotic stare. Antonio's whole person seemed to bristle with aggressive virtue as he bore the note down the aisle to the teacher's desk. She was a young teacher with a healthy sense of fun, and her lips twitched in spite of herself as she consigned the paper to the waste basket and Ramon to an extra session after school.

Antonio had overreached himself and given Ramon a glimpse of his hand in the affair. The next epistle traveled a circuitous route and stated,

Cupid and the First Reader

A T is a fat day go jug

Guadalupe would not read it for anything! To show her utter scorn of the presumptuous bit of paper, she set her Reader squarely over it and forgot it so completely that when a little later the Reader slid into her lap, the note went with it unheeded. Of course she did not peruse it under her desk, but for some reason her eyes sought Ramon's before long, and he knew that she understood.

During the weeks that followed, the teacher bestowed liberal praise for the regular attendance of Ramon Morales and Guadalupe Puentes, as well as their eager appetite for vocabulary. Possibly she was not altogether blind to the cause, but of this she said nothing.

All at once the path of knowledge knew Guadalupe's willing feet no longer. Ramon's expression shaded from dejection the first day to tragedy on the third. The sympathetic teacher detained the miserable youth after school.

"Ramon, I have a favor to ask of you. Would you be willing to find out why Guadalupe Puentes has been absent these last two days?"

"Yes, so it has been three days."

"Three days," corrected Ramon.

"I know not the house of Guadalupe," he said eagerly.

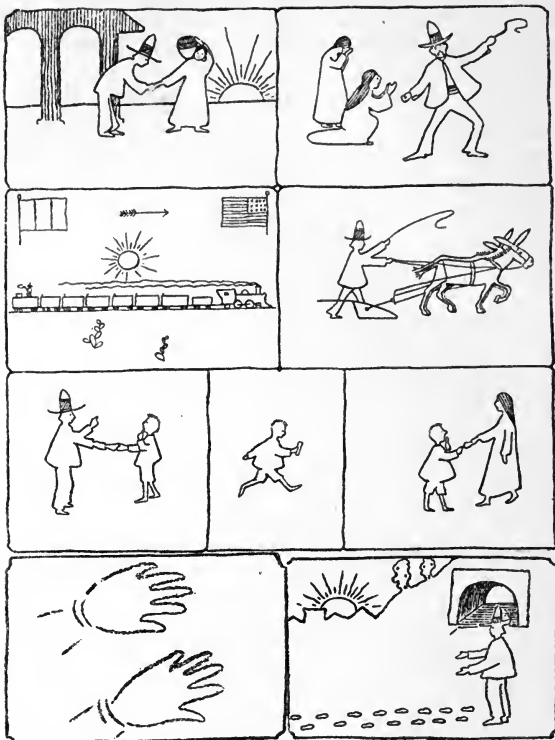
"Her family live in one of those freight cars in the river bottom. It is a long way, and perhaps——"

"I go glad, teacher. Much glad I go."

The village of sidetracked freight cars, utilized as dwellings for the peon railroad laborers, was visible from afar. The town on wheels was swarming with brown humanity, and garlanded with multi-colored garments drying in the sun.

A pleasant-featured, fleshy dame sitting in her doorway noticed Ramon peering eagerly into car after car.

The Hieroglyphics of Love



Cupid and the First Reader

"Enter, senor," she called.

"Gracias, senora." Ramon gladly accepted the other chair the dwelling afforded.

"Here you live very much at your pleasure," observed the youth, politely scanning the walls hung with gaudy religious prints and strings of red peppers, the decent bed, and tiny cookstove.

"Si, senor, the saints be praised."

A handsome rooster tied to the bedpost crowed vociferously.

"Hush, mal criado!" cried his mistress. "Can't I ever say a word without your unblessed noise?" Then she added to Ramon, in low and confidential tones: "You really must excuse him. He does not mean to be impolite, but it is hard for him to restrain himself when he hears my voice."

"Have no care, senor. I do not mind him. Perhaps you can tell me in which car lives Guadalupe Puentes."

"So many cars come and go. Who is she?"

"A girl who came to our school. She has been absent since Monday. The teacher sent me to look for her."

"Monday night ten cars were taken from the end of this row while we slept. Tuesday morning they were gone."

"Where?" cried Ramon.

"My man said they had been taken to Colton."

"Will they return?"

"Dios sabe," she responded with lifted shoulders and outward-turning palms.

"I must find her! I must!" cried Ramon rising restlessly to go.

"I perceive that you are a good youth and zealous to obey your teacher," observed the dame, her beady black eyes twinkling shrewdly. "Adios, senor. May you have good fortune."

The Hieroglyphics of Love

Two months later the carholder's wife sat by her doorway in the last fading light. Supper was over and her husband visiting his cronies down the line of cars. She looked at a little patch of corn, strong and green, that she had planted by the track, and wondered who would harvest it, humming the while a strain from an old folk song:

“When lovers meet upon the road,
Their vows are as the corn,
Plentiful as corn their sighs.
My little love, where art thou?”

Suddenly a young man, unkempt, ragged, exhausted, stumbled up the steps and dropped into the vacant chair. His body drooped forward and his hands hung weakly between his knees.

“I could not find her!” he groaned.

“Have you been seeking all this time?” inquired the carholder's wife sympathetically.

“Si, senora.”

“You have a strange teacher.”

“She did not send me, senora. I love the girl I must find her. I cannot live without her.”

“Where have you been?”

“I followed the cars to Colton on foot, but they had been moved on to San Bernardino. They had stayed there three days repairing track and then been sent along to El Paso.”

“El Paso is far if one has not money in the pocket.”

“I had none, senora. Sometimes I walked. Sometimes I stole a ride. Sometimes I stopped and worked that I might not starve. I could not help wondering why the good God made the world so big and the places on it so far apart. I could learn nothing in El Paso. I came home as best I might.”

“Where shall you look now?”

“Everywhere in all the world.”

Cupid and the First Reader

"My son, I am old and you are young. I have learned that it is useless to cross the ideas of the blessed saints. Go home, comfort your mother, and do the will of your father. If it is meant that you should have this girl, you could not run away from her in one of those American red wagons, no, not though the devil under the seat should break his back pushing you so fast."

In accordance with the advice of the carholder's wife, Ramon presented himself at school the following morning. Putting his elbows on his desk and his head in his hands, he stared savagely at his First Reader. He would not look at her seat—vacant, it would pierce him to the heart; to see another girl there would be more than he could endure. Yet in the very instant of his resolve not to look, his eyes were irresistibly drawn in that direction.

What he saw caused him to leap from his seat and rush across the schoolroom. Involuntarily, Guadalupe rose by her desk and leaned against him trembling and nonresistant, while, with his arm around her, he poured out in a scarcely articulate flood, his love, his search, his joy.

She had not gone away at all, she murmured. Her father had said that, since she was so fond of the school, he would find other work and move nearer; but he made her stay out a week to help with the house hunting and moving. When she returned to the school—here she began to sob like an overwrought child.

With the exception of a few stolid, uncomprehending cherubim, the First Grade had by this time escaped from their seats and gathered around the emotional storm center, hooting, giggling, or sympathizing according to sex and temperament. Antonio Taliberti

The Hieroglyphics of Love

stepped on a seat and pointed a derisive thumb at the lovers.

"Teacher," he shrilled, "I no can study when Greasers all the time hug themselves."

The wise instructor did not interfere until the first shock of their reunion had spent itself; she knew the Latin blood too well for that.

"Ramon and Guadalupe!" she now called sternly, "this is a terrible breach of discipline, terrible!"

Confused and abashed, the guilty pair stepped apart with hanging heads, while the other pupils sought their seats with hasty deprecation of the pedagogical wrath.

"For punishment you shall remain in the school-room during the whole recess and copy these sentences twenty times."

Firmly she inscribed on the blackboard,

*The little hen fly to me
The little hen flew to the duck.*

"Yes, teacher," said Ramon with a beaming smile.

"No, teacher," gurgled the blushing Guadalupe, "the duck he fly to the hen."

An Aztec Biography



O a girl baby born in an adobe hut in a Mexican village, the earliest impressions of life consisted of hunger, cold and vermin, varied at long intervals by sensations of food and warmth. The first vague stirring of reason was the discovery, confirmed by each succeeding phase of experience, that all protest was useless; hence, after the first meaningless wailing of tiny infancy, she never cried, but turned a stolid, unblinking stare at the facts of life, not regarding them with curiosity, still less with any hope of altering them. They were there and she had nothing else to look at. She was taken to the parish church and christened "Cresencia." She wore a white lace christening robe, though there were at least two circumstances to temper any undue haughtiness of spirit which this display might have engendered. The lace, a scrap of an old curtain, was spread directly over her greasy rags, and the old woman who rented it out at six cents a christening stood waiting to recover it at the church door.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

During the next period of her existence, Cresencia was carried on her eight-year-old sister's back, bound there with a rebozo which cut her thin legs, and she took naps with her poor little head dangling like a broken flower; but she never complained.

When she could toddle alone, she played. Play is the compensation that all young things have for their helplessness. She joined the family circle squatted on the dirt floor around a dish of frijoles and chili, which they dipped out with tortillas, then ate the tortillas and licked their fingers for dessert. As for clothes, Cresencia wore anything she happened to find among the heap of filthy rags in one corner of the hut, and she slept on any spare corner of the rush sleeping-mats among her brothers and sisters, the dogs, the chickens and the pig.

At eight years her childhood was over and she was saddled with a baby; after that she became a little old woman.

As is often the case with the other extreme of society, her education was superficial and more in the line of accomplishments than solid learning. She could dance the jarabe very prettily, she could make tortillas and drawn-work, while as to manners, she never left the hut without kissing her mother's hard and dirty hand.

When the sleeping-mats had been hung outside the door in the sun, the refuse swept into the corner with a bit of brush, and some impossible tissue-paper flowers, a gift from the pulque-shop, placed before the little santo, she experienced a distinct sense of satisfaction. She had a similar agreeable sensation every St. John's Day after her bath, and thought of repeating it some time, even when not actually required by the holy church, but then a year does slip away so easily.

An Aztec Biography

At eight Cresencia had been a little old woman; at fifteen she was a young lady. Very pretty she now was, with her smooth brown skin, great black eyes, and a mass of jet-black hair as coarse as a horse's mane, while her hands and feet were small and shapely. She ironed at twelve cents a day for a neighboring laundress and bought herself a pink calico skirt, an embroidered chemise, a new blue rebozo and a string of red coral.

She set herself to acquire this finery as naturally, almost as unconsciously, as a bird plumes itself in mating season, and soon a lover appeared.

Pancho was a soldier with bold black eyes that made her heart dance; he had also thick lips and a brutal jaw; but many another woman has overlooked small defects like these in the man she loved.

"Dear Pancho, I am so tired of working," she said one night. "And really there is no need, for my clothes are new and will last a long time. The irons burn my hands and I am always thinking how much better to sit here in the Plaza with you all day long. Wouldn't it make you happier, my life?"

"Where would the money come from to buy pulque compuesto, and how could we be happy sitting here when I was perishing of thirst?" he inquired in an aggrieved tone. Cresencia gave a little sigh of resignation as she tried to cool her throbbing fingers on the stone bench.

One day Pancho drew five dollars in the lottery.

"Come," said Cresencia, clapping her hands in delight, "let us be married by the priest."

"Caramba! Are we such grand folks? When I get ready I'll say, 'Cresencia, you're my woman,' and that won't cost a centavo."

"Oh, Pancho, it would feel so safe and good and respectable!"

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"What donkeys women are!" was his ungracious response; but Cresencia had her will for once. The way to the pulque-shop lay past the church, and after the ceremony there was still enough money left for Pancho and his father-in-law and his mother-in-law to get gloriously drunk in celebration of the glad event.

After they had passed the yelling and brawling stage and sunk into drunken slumber, the bride sat on the doorstep, watching the moon rise over the distant mountains, almost wondering why things couldn't have been different some way.

Pancho's regiment was soon ordered away, and Cresencia followed on long, weary day's marches. In a distant city she found employment in making tortillas, visiting the barracks daily with pulque and various delicacies for her husband.

Trouble began one day when she happened to go half an hour early and caught Pancho accepting tamales de dulce from another girl. That was too much for even long-suffering Cresencia.

"You pig!" she screamed, "look at me! See my feet how they are torn by the roads I travel to follow you! See my clothes, all rags and dirt,—and why? Because you must fatten yourself on every cent I earn, and now it takes two of us to stuff you, does it? Well, let her bring your swill and I will fatten myself for a change. Adios, cochino!"

This had drawn a delighted, jeering crowd, who laughed when the brute first snatched the basket, and then struck her a stinging blow on the cheek, which caused her to stagger back and go off sobbing into her rebozo.

Pancho was soon brought to terms by hunger and thirst induced by army rations without his usual extras, so he sent Cresencia a humble message, though he at once redeemed his masculine dignity when she ap-

An Aztec Biography

peared. "Crescencia, you have a very bad disposition," he said loftily, "but I will forgive you this time. What have you in the basket?"

Such episodes occurred often, and Crescencia would leave the barracks vowing never to return, only to slink back like a faithful dog to be abused again.

Pancho's regiment moved every few months, it was difficult to find work in strange places, the long marches exhausted her, and two babies in rapid succession preferred to close their eyes on such a wayfaring life.

One summer morning, five years after her marriage, Crescencia trudged after the regiment through the streets of the City of Mexico, with her third baby in her arms, a sickly child of three months. The mother was a wretched object, worn and dirty, uncombed and ragged, without a trace of her girlish beauty.

When she reached some stone pillars still known as the "City Gates," though the gates are no longer there, the child was gasping feebly. She sat down by the roadside and fanned him gently with her tattered rebozo. A woman passed, coming from the fountain with a jar of water on her head.

"For the love of God, give me water for my child," implored the mother.

Together they dropped a little water between the parted lips and bathed the tiny weazened face, but in a few moments the gasping ceased, the little form was limp and breathless and fast becoming cold. The mother clasped it to her once, convulsively, then stared stupidly into vacancy.

"Come with me," said the other. "My mistress is a Gringa, but a good woman, like an angel from Heaven, and she will help you bury the babe." Crescencia hesitated and looked long after the departing army, now a mere cloud of dust down the long road to Tacuba, but she rose and followed the woman.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

Her new friend conducted her to an American mission in the city, and left her in the patio surrounded by a sympathetic throng of servants, while she went to call her mistress.

The head missionary and her assistant were upstairs in the office preparing the monthly report for the Home Board when the servant entered. The elder woman had a mass of gray curls like winter sunshine, and her brown eyes looked out on the world with a trustful love that wrought miracles on worldly-minded people and hardened old sinners. Her cheeks were still pink—too pink in the afternoons, Miss Gilfillan had noted anxiously of late.

The assistant was fair and dainty. She wished her heathen to be clean and moral and respectful and picturesque and interesting, then she did not mind adding Christianity as a final adornment. But Miss Gilfillan was young and would grow in grace.

"Let me go, Mamacita," she said, when the servant had told her story. "I will see what can be done for the poor creature."

"No, dear; this is a case for me."

They bought a little coffin and had the child decently buried. The mother betrayed no emotion or gratitude beyond the fact of showing no disposition to leave the mission. She was not a valuable addition to the establishment; stupid, ignorant, sullen and lazy, she was the lowest of the lowly, the servant of the servants. They generally set her at scrubbing the flagstones of the patio, because there was no wrong way to do it and she could not avoid finishing in the course of time.

It seemed as if everything human had been crushed out of her. She had never even heard of her family since the day she marched away with Pancho. If she felt grief for her babies, it was hardly more than the

An Aztec Biography

physical sense of something missing from her arms; if she thought of her husband at all, it was only a dim and distant evil dream.

Down on her hands and knees at the scrubbing she appeared some sullen, half ferocious animal to Miss Gilfillan, who always drew back her skirts with a shiver of disgust as she passed. Mrs. Hammond thought "A woman who has suffered much," and never failed to rest her hand an instant, kindly, on the matted hair, or to send back a beaming smile from the landing, where she was obliged to make a long pause with both hands on her heart.

Slowly the household awoke to two discoveries—one that Mrs. Hammond was failing and must be sent home in the spring; the other, that when there was anything Cresencia could do for Mrs. Hammond, she never broke, nor spilled, nor lost, nor forgot, and not even Miss Gilfillan could wield the fan so skilfully to aid Mamacita's rapid, uneven breathing. So someone else did the scrubbing while Cresencia was easily induced to bathe, assume decent raiment, and become a respectable member of the mission family. Still, when not in attendance upon the invalid, she was always found crouched in some grotesque attitude in a sunny angle between the buildings, from whence she refused to stir except at the magic words: "The Nina wants you."

Once more Miss Gilfillan sat in the office laboring over the monthly report; but this time alone, for Mrs. Hammond had gone to "the States" a month before.

"Senorita," said the housekeeper, at the door.

"Well?"

"Senorita, the woman, Cresencia, is absolutely worthless. She won't do a thing but toast her lazy bones in the sun all day."

"Send her to me."

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"Si, Senorita."

This was only the ninth interruption, and Miss Gilfillan did not look up when the woman stood by her desk.

"Cresencia, I hear very bad reports of you. I do not doubt but that you miss Mamacita. I miss her dreadfully myself; but I have to go on working and so must you. If you cannot do better I shall be obliged to send you away."

"Not that, Senorita! Anything but that! I will do better! Oh, I will! Just say you will not send me away!"

"Why are you so anxious to stay here where you care nothing about pleasing us?" asked the missionary curiously.

"Oh, try me again, Senorita! I will not be bad any more. I must be here when my Nina sends for me to come and live with her."

"Why, she cannot possibly send for you. She has gone to live in a home for worn-out missionaries of our denomination. Did she promise to send for you?"

"At first she said she could not; but I begged her to speak to her God about it, and she said she would, and she is so good, I am sure her God could not deny her anything, and I pray to the Virgin all the time also, and perhaps she will help a little."

Suddenly Miss Gilfillan saw how thin and wasted the poor creature was, what a strange glitter in her eyes, and how she stood hugging herself to keep down some fearful pain.

"Cresencia, you are sick," she exclaimed.

"No, Senorita; it is nothing; only a little pain sometimes. De veras I can do my work. Oh, you will not send me away!"

"No; but I must find out what is the matter with you," she said, ringing a bell.

An Aztec Biography

"Isn't the doctor here vaccinating the boarding pupils?" she asked the servant.

"He is, Senorita."

"Ask him to please come here at once."

The doctor came, made a hasty examination, asked a few questions, and then delivered the verdict: "Internal cancer, far advanced."

"But, doctor, she has never complained."

"Speaks well for her stoicism. She must have endured the most excruciating pain continuously for months."

"It wasn't stoicism, doctor. She wanted to take care of Mamacita. 'Greater love hath no man than this,' " she quoted, softly; then aloud: "What could have caused it?"

"Probably a playful habit her husband had of kicking her."

"How dreadful! Can nothing be done for her?"

"Absolutely nothing. The only alleviations life can offer her now are plenty of morphine and a comfortable corner to die in," and the doctor returned to his vaccinating.

Day after day, and week after week, Cresencia lay on her cot, silent, but gentle and grateful, always with the look of one who watches and waits.

Miss Gilfillan found a gaudy railroad folder in her desk and sent it out to Cresencia, thinking that it might amuse her. The instant she caught sight of a cut of a locomotive her face was transfigured with joy. "Oh, my Nina! My Nina! She has not forgotten me! Her shadow covers me still! She has sent for me at last! Here is the ticket."

The news spread among the servants and they gathered and eyed the mysterious document respectfully. No one could have undeceived her but Miss Gilfillan, and she would not for the world.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

Every day Cresencia felt sure she was better and would soon start to join her mistress; but when at last she could not lift her head from the pillow, she understood the bitter truth. Turning her face to the wall she spoke no word for three days; the fourth day she seemed cheerful and lay gazing contentedly into vacancy with her cheek against the precious folder.

At sunset she sent for Miss Gilfillan.

Miss Gilfillan seated herself by the bed and took the cold brown claws between her soft, warm hands.

"What can I do for you, Chula?" she asked, tenderly.

"The Nina will think it so strange I do not come when she sent the ticket. Please send it back to her and tell her what passed with me that I could not. But I am not sad, because last night the Blessed Virgin of the church where I used to pray when I was a little girl, stood in the doorway there. She had the same red velvet dress and three points broken off her little gold crown.

" 'Cresencia,' she said to me, 'when the saints arrive in heaven they are very tired at first from their good works, and close by the gate there is a little seat, a very poor and humble little seat, where you may sit and wait for your Nina, and when she comes you may rise and wait upon her.'

"And I cried out: 'Oh, dear Virgin, I don't need any seat; I can sit right on the ground!' but she was gone. Will you tell my Nina so she will look for me when she comes in at the gate?"

"Yes," answered the girl with a sob; "I will tell her."

The Taming of the Twins



Y the piano in the kindergarten stood a young Mexican mother. Her blue cotton rebozo slipped from dusky, uncombed plaits. Two brown youngsters, a boy and a girl, huddled timidly against her pink calico skirt.

The mother evidently desired to make some explanation before consigning her children to Miss Swinton, the brisk little kindergarten teacher. Half a dozen infants who spoke Spanish to their mothers and English to their teachers were suddenly taken with dumbness in both languages when called upon to interpret. At five a child can change a doll from a red gown to a blue one; but to be handed an idea in one language and consciously dress it in another is more difficult. Consequently a solemn, swarthy elf of seven, consisting mostly of great black eyes above a shapeless purple gown, was hastily borrowed from the Foreign First Grade.

Filomena beamed with shy pride at the importance of her mission.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"She say," slowly and softly feeling for each word, "She say this Armando—that Angelita."

The Mexican mother showed her white teeth in delighted confirmation.

"Yes, yes; Armando and Angelita," repeated Miss Swinton briskly. It was five minutes after nine and forty little kindergarten people were wriggling in forty little chairs arranged in the morning circle. Minnie Lyman, her Normal girl assistant, was sorting sewing cards at a desk nearby.

"She say," continued Filomena, cautiously, "they are two times."

"You mean, Filomena, that there are two of them; two dear little children more," with rather a forced smile as her eyes wandered to the circle full of incipient restlessness. "Ask her which is older, the boy or the girl?"

"They come together," answered the interpreter, with glib assurance.

"Yes, of course, they will come to school together; but I am inquiring about their ages. Find out which is older."

With her scornful pity for such denseness veiled by native courtesy, Filomena had recourse to the world language of pantomime. Both sharp little elbows flew out to form that cradling curve which is the universal sign of motherhood. Lost for a moment in her own acting, the brown, intense little face brooded alternately over an imaginary burden on either arm.

"I know," laughed Minnie Lyman, looking up from the sewing cards, "she means they are twins."

"How interesting!" murmured the kindergartener. "Miss Lyman do please direct the circle until I can finish here."

That word was what Minnie Lyman had been dreading. "Directing the circle" without her chief was no light task. Eye and voice exercised across its di-

The Taming of the Twins

ameter had no effect on what is known in kindergarten parlance as the "self activity" of the children. Miss Lyman's only method of control was perambulatory. Nature had constructed her on generous lines, and she had made the saving discovery that the sight of her blonde bulk bearing directly down upon some Italian imp had a temporarily soothing effect even though the imp was perfectly aware that she was harmless and warranted not to slap him nor pull his ears; yet the approach carried such strong associations with the more business-like swoop of mother or elder sister at home, that he quailed before it by mere force of habit. So Miss Lyman traveled around and around the restless circumference with a wave of naughtiness ebbing away in front of her, only to surge up again at her very heels.

Meanwhile, the solemn-visaged Mexican mother was anxiously endeavoring to unburden herself through Filomena.

"She say they's papa's a pick'n shovel man—make choo-choo trackee."

"Railroad construction, Filomena; you are too big a girl for baby talk."

"She say family live long time way up big hill." Filomena's brown hand waved aloft to indicate unspeakable altitude and remoteness. "No school,—she feel very sick of the heart for that;— now they come school—she much glad."

Really touched and interested, Miss Swinton beamed her cordial welcome, while the mother showed her white teeth in return, just for the merest flash. Then her face fell back into its former burdened expression, and she fairly deluged Filomena with soft Spanish speech, full of minor cadences. Evidently she had not yet reached the important part of her revelation. Miss Swinton resolutely withdrew her eyes from the circle. She knew by experience that there are no cross cuts

The Hieroglyphics of Love

in the Mexican mind. It is a labyrinth and sympathetic patience the only thread which can guide one to its center.

Filomena's tone now dropped to sorrowful apology. "She say you please excuse—the children—they very wild."

"Wild!" The kindergartener forgot the circle and the clock while she studied the children intently. Angelita was more than plump, she was fat—a reproduction in little of the heavy, stolid, oily fatness which often comes upon Mexican women at middle age. Her face was a blank, because the skin was fairly stretched with no allowance made for creases of expression. She wore a bright mother-hubbard dress, with a three-inch wide garniture of cheap lace, extending it to her ankles. A porpoise might be rampant, but it was absolutely impossible to connect any manner of wildness with Angelita.

"She say you please excuse—they very wild—all times they very wild," mournfully reiterated Filomena.

Then Miss Swinton contemplated Armando. The distribution of flesh had been notably unequal. The boy was a weazened up little fellow, with a head too large for his body. His shock of black hair was sprouting through the interstices of his old straw hat; his faded overalls, neither long nor short, hung loosely upon his lean shanks. His expression belonged to an ancient of days. Methuseleh might be considered a gay young blade, but Armando wild? Never!

"You excuse," insisted Filomena, plaintively.

Miss Swinton nodded and smiled energetically; not that she perceived any signs of wildness in the twins, but merely expressing her willingness to overlook any untoward traits whatsoever.

Whoever believes that a Mexican is always slow will

The Taming of the Twins

sometime find himself mistaken. The crafty mother gently unclasped the children's hands from her skirt, linking them together instead. Then she directed their gaze to a chicken done in crayon on the blackboard—a chicken whose yellow plumpness reminded one of Angeleta.

The children turned from the chicken just in time for a vanishing glimpse of their mother's traitorous pink skirt. They made a simultaneous dash for the door, but evidently their worldly experience did not include door knobs as they tugged and rattled at this one without attempting to turn it. Armando shrieked, "Mamacita! Mamacita!" while Angelita lifted her voice in wails of such rotund volume as the kindergartner had never heard before. When Miss Swinton approached with soothing words they retreated before her until they were fairly cornered in the recess behind the piano. Here Angelita endeavored to climb Armando, while he clawed the wall like a terror-crazed cat. Miss Swinton ran to call back the mother but her abandonment had been conclusive and she was nowhere in sight.

As every attempt to approach the little strangers only increased their distress, they were mercifully let alone, and their first acute outburst of grief soon gave way to subdued hopeless wailing, with intervals of half forgetting their own plight in watching the strange activities of the kindergarten.

When the principal entered in the course of his morning round, he left the door partly open and crossed the room to speak to Miss Swinton. With the cunning of the creatures of the field, Armano heard the door open and did not hear it close. Although encumbered by having Angelita in tow, he was half way down the long hall by the time Miss Swinton and the principal gained the Kindergarten door.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"Catch them!" cried the lady.

"What are they?" the principal delayed to ask.

"The twins! They're wild! They'll be lost or hurt! Catch them!"

The principal had been a sprinter in his college days and he clutched Angelita's yellow dress on the steps; but Armando, in his despair, abandoned her to her fate and plunged wildly on. She was handed over to Miss Swinton while Armando went careering madly about the playground calling alternately upon his mother and his God to deliver him from the tall principal close behind, to whom in these fragmentary prayers tossed off as he ran, he referred as "el diablo."

Released in the kindergarten room, the twins made at once for their refuge by the piano. Weariness from their attempted escape soothed their emotional centers and they soon ceased to cry audibly although the tears slid down Angelita's round cheeks while Armando glowered like a pigmy brigand.

The other children regarded them with curious awe. Why, not even Nicolo, the arch imp of the kindergarten, nor Teresa, who once made a face at Miss Lyman, would think of daring to sulk behind the piano, much less to run away.

"May I make a suggestion, Miss Swinton?" asked the Normal girl in a tone which implied that her suggestions were not usually appreciated at their true worth.

"Certainly," answered her superior, in a tone which denied the other's implication.

"Children always understand one another; therefore I would send children to deal with them. Moreover, I would send the two who most need training in gentleness and kindness, which would be Nicolo and Teresa."

Miss Swinton looked doubtful but the other's latent

The Taming of the Twins

injured expectation of a refusal influenced her against her better judgment.

"You may try it," she granted reluctantly.

"Nicolo and Teresa," commanded Miss Lyman, sweetly, "go and take that dear little boy and girl by the hand, tell them how glad we are to have them with us, and lead them to these little chairs."

In one respect did Miss Lyman's judgment prove itself entirely correct. Nicolo and Armando understood each other perfectly. Nicolo's chest expanded with the sense of his own importance. Not all the teachers nor even the principal had been able to cope with that Hop o-my thumb of a greaser. They had been obliged to call in the assistance of Nicolo, the bold, bad man of the kindergarten.

Armando viewed his approach with the satisfaction that even a hero may feel in a foe somewhere near his own size. It was the part of discretion to run from teacher-giants, but he had no idea of retreating before an insignificant fighty Dago not much larger than himself.

Teresa perceived that as the pink of social grace it was her appointed duty to initiate that fat, ignorant Mexican child into the rudiments of kindergarten etiquette. Angelita regarded her coming with evident distrust, but as usual waited for Armando to act first. When her brother and Nicolo, after preliminary blows, were rolling and growling on the floor, she put out her pudgy hand and neatly plowed three parallel scratches on Teresa's pert unturned countenance.

Miss Swinton allayed the general excitement, and left Miss Lyman to deal with the acute situation which she had created. That young woman dragged the combatants apart, drove Nicolo to his seat, and bore the screaming Teresa away to the cloak room. Teresa's spirits came out from under eclipse as her face

The Hieroglyphics of Love

emerged from the gray folds of the school towel. After sending the child back into the kindergarten, Minnie Lyman lingered in the outer doorway of the anti-room looking longingly where the quiet street bordered by shabby new cottages elbowing shabby old adobes led away from wild twins and perambulatory nightmares. Resolutely she closed the door and turned back to face the amused twinkle in the eyes of a freely criticised superior.

"Miss Swinton," she said, with new found meekness in her tone, "I've made a mistake just now, and I've been making a bigger one all along in thinking you ought to be trying every new fancy Normal method on these children with their limited concepts of kitchen and street. Will you trust me to try again?"

"Yes, dear." Miss Swinton had never called her assistant "dear" before and might never again; but it was the beginning of a better understanding between them.

Minnie Lyman's heart went out with a throb to the miserable little humans crouching behind the piano. This time she bethought herself of a box of candy in her desk. After arranging two chairs at a little table near the piano she laid a train of candy from the piano to the table. Angelita's sight clung greedily to a pink lozenge—her gastronomic instincts were well developed. Her hand followed her gaze and she hitched along the floor to the marshmallow beyond. She offered this to Armando but he distrusted the Greeks even bearing gifts and shook his head. His sister followed the sugary clew to the table where Miss Lyman adroitly managed a transition from walnut creams to the stringing of wooden beads. Angelita supposed that she was preparing these for her own adornment, and

The Taming of the Twins

hence her feminine love of finery conquered the lingering remnants of fear.

Armando watched her defection with reproachful eyes, but he also watched Miss Lyman dabbling a red rose and a yellow chicken onto a piece of water color paper. His surrender came through the higher motive of soul craving for art expression. When he thought no one was looking, he slipped into the chair beside Angelita. Never until that moment had his soul known joy. He painted wildly, passionately, breathlessly, like a dog gnawing a bone likely to be snatched away at any moment. His latest experiences tumbled out first as being on top. He pictured a small boy chased by a tall principal—he immortalized his contest with Nicolo—his enemy down and he standing triumphant on his chest.

In the midst of this artistic frenzy the door opened to admit the Mexican mother. The twins greeted her pleasantly but without enthusiasm. Reluctantly obedient, they parted with paint and beads, pressed soft kisses on Miss Lyman's hand in the pretty Mexican fashion and passed out pleading: "Manana, Mamacita? Manana?"

The Miracle of San Juanito



THOU knowest, good San Juanito, that youth is ever rash and our Mexican blood is a flame in the veins when we are wronged."

San Juanito had heard that same passionate cry every day for years and years, but the expression of benevolent interest on his small wooden countenance never flagged. A dingy little carved image, he stood on a tiny altar and held up his palm and crucifix bravely. True greatness is not measured by stature.

The speaker, Pepita Moreno, knelt before him on a threadbare red velvet stool, a woman more old than young, since her hair was turning gray and her face had deep lines of years and suffering, but the splendid black eyes were still brilliant and she carried her slender height as gracefully as a girl.

The house was a ruinous adobe in the old Mexican quarter of Los Angeles. The great, bare, whitewashed room contained only the altar and a long mirror in a tarnished gilt frame; one, the symbol of earthly vanity; the other, the very portal of heaven. All the

The Miracle of San Juanito

carved mahogany furniture had long since gone to buy food and charcoal or a rare black gown. The altar and mirror remained only because Pepita had nearly starved several times rather than sell either of them.

"They should have sent me to prison with Jose," she continued, "for truly the blame was more mine than his. Dost thou remember that Sixteenth of September and the Grand Ball? Dost thou remember me in my pink ball dress before the mirror? 'The fairest maid in Los Angeles,' they called me." Pepita gazed long into the mirror seeing only images of by-gone days.

"Yes, I had youth and beauty, but better than all else was my Jose. Every ribbon and flower on my pink gown was quivering with joy and pride that September night, for Jose, handsome, rich and generous, the best rider and the best shot in the pueblo, loved me and me alone.

"What evil spirit possessed me to dance so many times with the American that dreadful night? I cared nothing for his pale face and cold blue eyes. Jose was the light of my life, yet, because I was a woman, I must torment him.

"I have told thee many times, San Juanito, how the two men met outside the ballroom, both excited with wine and what high words followed. The American taunted Jose about me, saying that I was a coquette and any man might kiss me who wished, and he himself—thus he talked with his hand on his pistol ready to use it if he saw he had gone too far, but Jose was quicker and shot him through his evil heart.

"My lover rushed in to me and all the people at the ball made a ring about us and kept the officers back for a little time. Jose kissed me and forgave me; then he put me into my father's arms and went quietly with the men.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

“When the judge gave the sentence ‘imprisonment for life’ did he know what he said? For life! Why, a man has but one life. More fortunate the American, for the graveyard is a pleasant place, with trees and flowers and bird songs. The graveyard is better for a strong man than the living death of a prison cell.

“But I do wrong Santo querido, to remind thee of such sad things on thy anniversary. When did thy Pepita ever forget thy candles on the Sixteenth of May?” She brought six candles from the other room set in a motly array of bottles and cups and arranged them on the little altar about his feet.

“See, I take this one for the life candle of my Jose. If it is not the first to go out, it shall be the sign that he still lives.” She measured them carefully, selecting one that seemed a trifle longer than the others, then lighted them, leaving Jose’s till the last.

“I have a surprise for thee, little father.” She drew from her bosom a tiny silver milago, a curiously fashioned figure of a kneeling woman, and fastened it to the saint’s black robe. “Where did I get the money? Where, indeed, but from the rich Americana who bought my drawn work last week? The little woman is myself, just as I am always kneeling to thee and I believe thou hast some good gift to bestow on thy faithful Pepita today.. Does she not deserve it of thee?

“Now, I shall pray for my father and mother—that their souls may rest in peace. Thou art thinking of the time when three of us knelt before thee on this day and thy candles were many and of the finest perfumed wax. Those sad years followed when mother and I knelt alone; now Pepita has only thee, yet having thee, is not utterly forsaken.” She leaned over to kiss the saint’s well-worn little foot.

The Miracle of San Juanito

Pepita's whispered prayers were interrupted by some one who opened the street door behind her and entered, Mexican fashion, without knocking. She rose hastily to face the intruder and stood spellbound. She saw an old man, bent and wrinkled—Jose! She recognized him as through some poorly-fitting disguise that slips aside a little here and there.

"Dona Rosa Moreno," his voice was fairly shrill with eagerness, "tell me of your daughter Pepita."

"Dios mio!" murmured the woman; "Jose thinks I am my mother."

"Why do you pause? Pepita is dead?"

"No, Senor; she is alive."

"Gracias a Dios! But she is married?"

"No, senor; she has never married."

"Christ is merciful! Why is she not married?"

"Lovers she has had in abundance; but she has been faithful to one Jose who was sent to prison for life forty long years ago."

"Tell her that Jose is free at last! Tell her that for forty years of good conduct he was granted these last few years of liberty."

Senor, this is a miracle wrought by our blessed San Juanito, who has heard Pepita praying for her Jose all hours of the day and night."

The old man crossed himself. "The good saint shall have many candles and a votive picture. But pray, Senora, hasten! Tell Pepita that Jose's every thought has been for her; that every night he has seen her in his dreams. Oh, tell her quickly, that I may embrace my true love!"

"Si, Senor," answered the clear, calm voice, "this will be great news for Pepita who has waited so faithfully; but, tell me, when shall we have the pleasure of greeting Jose? Will he arrive soon?"

"Soon, woman! I am Jose."

The Hieroglyphics of Love

“You, Senor? Impossible!”

“I swear it, Senora. Call Pepita at once. She will recognize me.”

“Why should I call her? Will she care to know that an old man waits without? Her Jose is young and beautiful. Behold!” She opened a locket that hung around her neck. The old man looked at the insolent, dark beauty of the youth in the miniature. By the irony of chance, he lifted his eyes to the long mirror.

“Does any man live forty years in prison and keep his boy’s face?” he demanded, passionately. “I am Jose. What matter the gray hairs and the wrinkles when my heart is the heart of Jose; but you need not call Pepita. I will go.”

“Does a woman live forty years in loneliness and grief and keep her girl’s face. You, an old man come here on a fool’s quest for the youth and beauty of Pepita. Yes, go! Seek them in your dreams and leave me in peace.”

Jose stared at his old love, standing there in her regal calm though the rosary snapped in her tense fingers. Suddenly his face shone.

“Pepita mia,” he cried, “beloved, how beautiful thou art!”

San Juanito surveyed them benignantly and remarked to himself that love is immortal.

A Guadalupe Wooing



UNDREDS of pilgrims toiled along the dusty highway leading from the City of Mexico to the sacred village of Guadalupe. The aristocracy of the road journeyed in heavy carts, each drawn by a pathetically small and discouraged donkey, while a few others

were so fortunate as to have a burro with baskets for the children.

A small peon in white cotton blouse and trousers, red sash and big sombrero, who was trudging along bravely in spite of a slight limp, was overtaken by a buxom woman of his own class, taller, broader and older than himself.

"Adios, amigo," she said, this being the usual salutation of the road.

"Adios, amiga," he responded, somewhat shyly.

"Do you travel alone?"

"My little grandmother has gone on ahead in a friend's cart," he answered, with pardonable pride in revealing such intimate relations with the aristocracy.

The Hieroglyphics of Love

"It is very fine to ride in a cart." Her subtle flattery of manner made him feel as important as though he owned a dozen carts.

"What might be your worship's name?" she continued.

"I am Pablo, and your servant. What is your own gracious name?"

"Juana, at your service. Do you live in Mexico, Pablo?"

"I am portero in the house of Don Pancho Nunez, and I take pleasure in placing at your orders the little room under the stairs where I live with my grandmother."

They jogged on together amiably for some time, more and more pleased with each other, more and more personal and confidential in their intercourse.

"Pablo, what favor are you going to ask this year of our gracious Lady of Guadalupe?"

Pablo sheepishly drew a milagro from his bosom—a tiny figure of a kneeling woman.

"I am going to pray fervently for a wife. My grandmother is too old to make the tortillas, and, more over, she scolds me all the time she is awake. If she only had a daughter-in-law I would be left in peace at least half the day, which would be a blessing. Tell me, Juana, the desire of thy heart."

The woman untied a knot in her blue rebozo and produced a little silver man.

"I am going to pray for a husband," she confessed; "but if your grandmother hadn't such a violent disposition—"

"The saints forbid that I should speak any evil of my grandmother, who is a worthy woman and means well."

"Then," she said doubtfully, "perhaps it might be arranged."

A Guadalupe Wooing

Something in the patient limp and drooping shoulders appealed to sturdy Juana, and Pablo, looking up, caught an expression of protecting, half-maternal tenderness which caused him to break forth impulsively:

"I swear, Juana, that I love thee with all my soul."

"Muy bien, Pablo," she answered, calmly, with a friendly arm about his shoulders, your grandmother may abuse me all she likes—that is the respect due to the old—but if she abuses you, there will be war between us."

"Juana mia, you are an angel."

"No, Pablo, you do me too much honor. See, there comes the electric car."

"How can it go so fast without even one little burro to pull it?"

"They say it is that stick on top."

"But what holds up the stick?"

"They say it is the devil. If I put up my hand, Pablo, the car would stop."

"But why should you want it to stop?"

"You little stupid! Why should we plow the dust with our weary feet when we might ride?"

"What is the cost?"

"Nine cents agiece."

"Eighteen cents is a large sum of money, Juana, and would buy much pulque and many cigarettes. Besides, you say it is of the devil."

"I will pay it, Pablo."

"Well, my life, I doubt if it will stop for your little hand, but you may try."

"What joy! It was like flying," remarked Pablo, complacently, as they climbed down from the car in front of the church at Guadalupe. Near by, a little old woman, whose beady black eyes twinkled out from a mass of wrinkles, was being lifted from a

The Hieroglyphics of Love

cart, when she perceived her grandson, who dutifully hastened to her side, followed by Juana.

"Ingrate!" she screamed, "you send your poor old grandmother jolting over the rough road in a cart and you ride like a lord in the electric car."

"I paid for him," interposed Juana stoutly.

"Does that make it any better? What right had you to pay for him? You pig! You shameless one! You yard of red tape!"

"Grandmother," ventured Pablo, timidly, "this is the woman whom the Virgin of Guadalupe has given me for a wife, but (he quailed before the lightning in the old woman's eyes) of course she needn't stay if you don't like her."

Stung by such base desertion and too proud to let the others see her tears, Juana turned and marched away. Pablo would have followed her, but his grandmother's skinny arm held him back.

It was the eve of Guadalupe Day. The village was thronged with pilgrims, the stately towers and domes of the great church stood up dark and majestic against the starry sky; hundreds of the faithful had spread their zarapes in the stone-paved churchyard and were sleeping huddled together for warmth.

A solitary woman carrying a pine torch made her way with difficulty among the sleepers. It was Juana. Her inflamed eyelids betrayed the recent storm, but her features had settled back to their usual stolid calm. Love had triumphed over anger and disillusion. A cracked idol is better than no idol at all, so she was seeking her recent lover.

Pablo, aroused by the light of the torch in his face, beheld his true love bending over him like a vengeful Amazon. "Come," she said. He glanced uneasily at his grandmother, but she slept peacefully. He rose

A Guadalupe Wooing

and followed Juana, muttering incoherent apologies mingled with vows of undying affection, but she made no response until they had left the churchyard and climbed some distance up the steep village street.

"Here we can talk in secret," she said, as she took out a key, opened a heavy door, and conducted Pablo through a large, empty room into a smaller one at the back. Here she thrust the torch into the dirt floor.

"Pablo, I want you to wait here until I bring your grandmother to terms and then I will come for you."

Her companion did not look pleased at this proposition.

"She will think I am dead," he answered, edging uneasily toward the door.

Juana planted herself firmly in the doorway.

"And when she finds it out she will be very angry," he continued, weakly. He next tried to crowd past Juana, but finding this impossible, he threw himself sulkily on the floor by the torch, with his back to her.

"There is no other way, Pablo. It will be no use for you to call out, as the walls are thick, and I have rented these rooms for as many days as I please, so no one will come." A full minute she stood contemplating Pablo in gloomy silence, torn by conflicting emotions; love and scorn, contempt, and the yearning tenderness a mother feels for a naughty child she has to punish, all struggling for mastery. She turned away, and Pablo heard her latch the inner door and turn the key in the outer one.

The next morning a wildly excited old crone stormed up and down among the crowd seeking her grandson and the strange woman with whom she connected his disappearance, cursing them by every saint in the calendar. When she discovered Juana sitting alone by the plaza fountain, she seemed all at once to

The Hieroglyphics of Love

shrivel up still smaller and her voice sank to a pitiful quaver.

"Where is he? Where is my Pablito?"

"How should I know?" answered the younger woman, indifferently. "You took him away from me."

"Oh, my poor boy! My dear boy, always so good to his old grandmother! Where is he? she wailed.

"He said yesterday," remarked Juana, carelessly, "that if you would not allow him to marry me, he was going to hide and starve himself to death."

"Oh, my angel grandchild! May the Virgin of Guadalupe forgive me for a wicked old woman! Even now he is dying of hunger! Find him, woman, and he is yours. You have my blessing! Only find him quickly! Go!" she cried, wringing her hands. Juana darted away and was soon lost in the crowd.

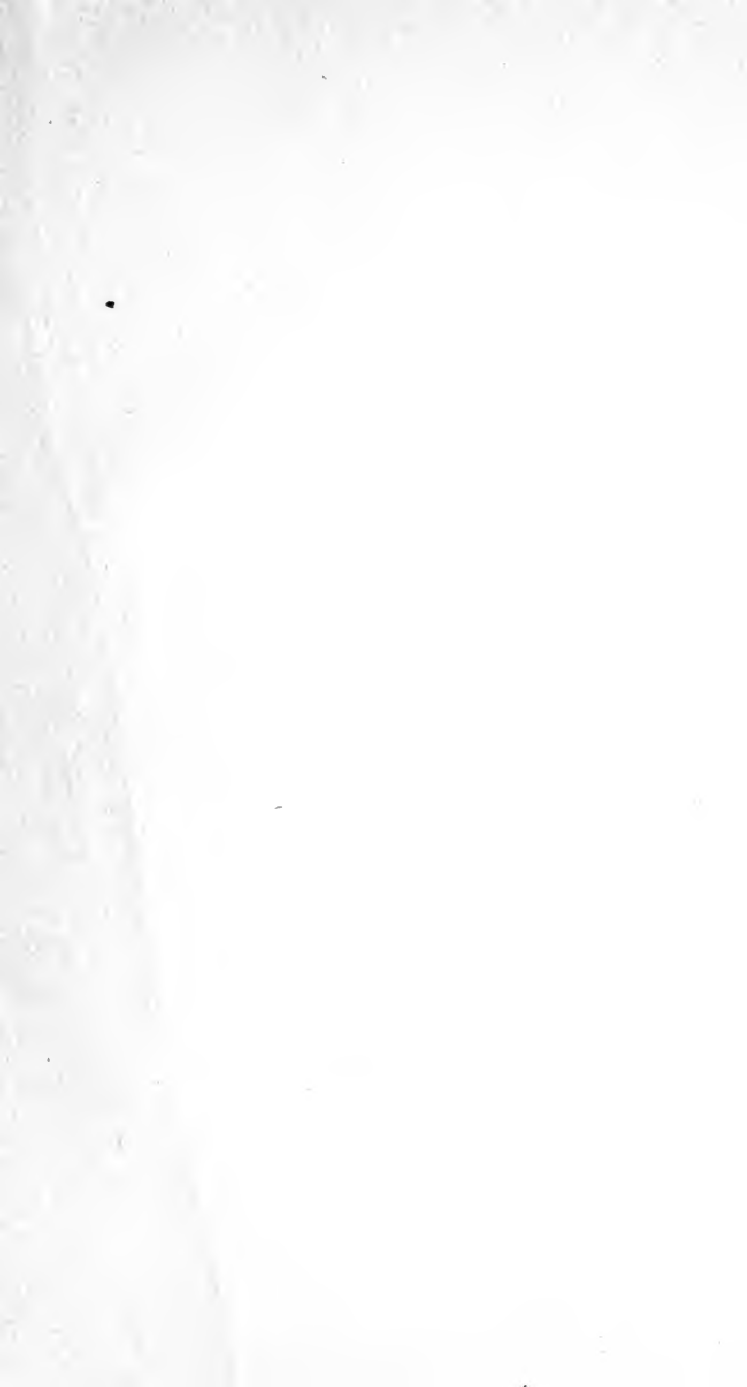
The church was filled to the doors with kneeling devotees holding lighted candles. Clouds of incense rolled up from the altar, half obscuring the fair face and gracious figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe, that famous virgin who appeared, painted in supernatural beauty, on the blanket of a pious Indian nearly three centuries ago.

This morning her glance seemed to fall benignantly on an insignificant little lame peon in the front row, who knelt between two women, each of whom clasped one of his hands. The grandmother surveyed him anxiously lest even the bountiful breakfast which she and Juana had provided might fail to save him from starvation, while the younger woman leaned towards him with an expression of utter adoration, showing that, after the manner of womankind, she had persuaded herself that he was everything her heart could wish.

Here then ends the "Hieroglyphics of Love" as written by Amanda Mathews, with frontispiece by her, the decorations being by Ralph Fullerton Mocine, and published by the Artemisia Bindery, which is in Los Angeles, California, at the Sign of the Sagebrush; and completed on the Twenty-second day of November, One thousand nine hundred and six.







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